Being Backward: The Internalized Racial Discourse in China’s Modernization

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ABSTRACT

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Being Backward: The Internalized Racial Discourse in China’s Modernization

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Using critical racial theory, this paper examines the feeling of self-hatred, the anti-Manchu sentiment, white privilege and brown racism as three variations of popular racial discourse in the post-Mao China. The knowledge of global racial hierarchy was internalized in contemporary Chinese society through a discourse of modernization and people’s anxiety of being backward. I also explore the resources for the operation of global racial hierarchy in contemporary China. The tradition of a hierarchical world order as well as the political and economic policy shift under the direction of developmentalism and liberalization since 1980s all contribute to the consolidation of Western hegemony. Intertwining with various popular political and historical, cultural discourses, racial discourse in China is molding the way through which people express their anxiety, frustration and hope in rapid social transformation, as well as their perspectives on the past and future.
DEDICATION

To My Homeland
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The problem [of history] has been resurrected time and time again as the revolutionization of Chinese society has taken new twists and turns. And it seems safe to predict that as long as the problem of revolution persists, so will the problem of history.¹

When Englishmen, and others, called the Chinese “barbarians,” they sowed the seeds of the greatest national loss of self-confidence the world has ever known. No people had ever been more sure of the themselves than the Chinese, and so no people were ever made more painfully unsure of themselves.²

This paper is concerned with China’s popular racial discourse in the post-Mao era. By the analysis of variations of racial discourse, I seek to depict how the knowledge of global racial hierarchy was internalized in contemporary Chinese society. Intertwining with various popular political and cultural discourses, racial discourse is molding the way through which people express their anxiety, frustration and hope in rapid social transformation, as well as their perspectives on the past and future.³

This paper explores the concept of racism through the dimensions of culture. Historically, racial issues read equally as culture issues, because racial hierarchy in essence is a hierarchy to judge and rank different peoples’ capacity and quality of their culture. Western imperialism should be regarded not only as a military and economic expansion but also a global diffusion of knowledge. Knowledge of the West, including the scientifically packaged modern racial theory, spread and destroyed indigenous people’s self-confidence in their own culture. The diffusion is not a finished process, and

³ My paper examines different agents’ perceptions of the world and national history. My major concern is to analyze “what is believed as true,” rather than “what is true.” This paper will include a discussion of why people in the colonized country would accept the lenses of colonists.
its consequence continues to influence the world: The foreign knowledge, both coercively stuffed into and actively embraced by local people, became the essential part of a new knowledge system as the resource to re-organize society, as well as the underpinning of racism in the post-colonial era.

As a legacy of colonialism, racism quietly takes root in modern China’s great social transformation. In this story, the self-loathing iconoclasts in China are eager to break off with the backward Chinese culture and corrupt national character. They seek a new enlightenment to replace the traditional mold in order to merge with the global trends of modernity and civilization. The feeling of self-hatred, which paradoxically had been long regarded as nationalist passion, is so strong that even the Western imperialist aggression became excusable, even imperative. On the other side of the story, the anti-Manchu sentiment that became prevalent in the last decades of the Qing Dynasty – the regime founded by the Manchus – surprisingly resurges after one century. Neither the Han-Manchu ethnic conflict over sovereignty nor the independence of Manchu was a problem. Nevertheless, the Han Chauvinists stuck to the image of a great descent of Han with all the necessary traits for modernization, which, as believed, should have led China to access the correct historical tunnel to industrial revolution without the savage Manchu’s interruption. Beside the cultural racial prejudice against the natives, daily discrimination against people of color also exists in China. All of the variations of popular discourse share a similar racial vision: groups of people and their culture could be evaluated as advanced or backward, by a Western-centric scale in the name of modernization.
My paper is not a renunciation of modernization. I also do not want to accuse the actors in this story as intentional racists, or their action and opinion as simply a passive result of imperialism brainwash. What I want to indicate is: when people in the third-world countries deliberate and debate the way forward for their nations – usually a way to “catch up” modernization, how inevitably appeared in their mind the specter of racism. However, diffusion of racial knowledge should not be regarded as a one-off and single-dimensional process because foreign knowledge of oppression might be embraced by local intellectuals and used as a language of liberation. It is in such a paradoxical situation that racism proves its persuasiveness and strong vitality.

The Personal Inquisitiveness

I was surprised to read a set of articles posted on the online Chinese-language edition of the New York Times. A columnist reported a linguist’s finding: “A linguist and author who speaks or writes 10 languages including Chinese believes character writing systems inhibit a type of deep creativity,” the post wrote, unlike the alphabetic language systems in the West, which can “foster early skills in analysis and abstract thinking,” “learning Chinese lessens deep creativity by furthering practical, but not abstract, thinking.” For William C. Hannas, the linguist, China’s success in development depends on its ability of “improving existing models” and institutions to import and pirate foreign invention.4 Hannas establishes a causal chain: cultural defect harms national capability and indirectly leads to despicable behavior.

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The linguist argues that his study is not racially biased. In a reader’s review posted later, the Chinese reader, Jiang Beining, agreed with him: “I do not think Hannas’s theory is racial discrimination. It is a linguistic study. A discussion on the shortcomings of Chinese characters is not criticism. Rather, it helps us to find out the reason to explain the backwardness of Chinese characters.” Although Jiang had a different explanation of how Chinese characters hamper creativity, he, Hannas, and another Chinese reader, Shi Lei, could achieve consensus on the linguist’s basic judgment. Shi spoke in an incontestable tone: “Chinese language does inhibit creativity. That is the fact. In the five-thousand-year-history of China, we had knowledge only, but no science. That is the most cogent evidence.”

I probably should not have been so surprised because defining Chinese language as a “backward” language which is harmful for its people is not a new argument. It is easy to find harsher judgments. In 2007, a Chinese professor of philosophy wrote in his online column:

The develop trend of human language is from pictographic to alphabetic systems. Chinese characters missed the special phase to evolve itself into alphabetic language in the evolutionary history of language. It is an irreversible loss, like a monkey forever lost the chance to become human…the pictographic system breeds totalitarianism, autocracy and keeps people foolish…It is the most cogent evidence of the mummification of Chinese culture…Chinese language does not have accurate grammar or strict logic…”

Furthermore, if we trace back the history, we will find a fierce attack launched by the Chinese against Chinese language one century ago. The iconoclastic intellectuals in

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the early 20th century believed the corrupted Chinese culture was responsible for China’s failure in the modern era, and as the carrier of culture, the character writing system and even the Chinese language should be abolished to cut the root of barbarism.

Nevertheless, intellectuals in the early 20th century made their arguments in a desperate situation. At that time, the country was in real emergent crisis. China’s continued military failure forced it to accept the unjust treaties, ceding territory and paying indemnities to the Western imperialists. Under that situation, intellectuals thought there was a trade-off between the nation’s tradition and the nation’s future, because it seemed that the future is a Western-style one. But China today had already been an independent country with strong economic and military power. Why is the debate to evaluate Chinese language by certain scales – “creativity” in the case of Hannas – not over? Why do people continue to define themselves as culturally backward? A related issue is that the scale for self-evaluation could also be adopted to measure other nations and ethnic groups. In this way, intra-group discrimination joins up with inter-group discrimination.

I feel deep sorrow every time I read the modern history of China, which records how a nation’s self-confidence was pulverized under foreign coercion. I appreciate those scholars’ assumptions were proved wrong by time because I cannot imagine a life without my native language, which always touches me with its shape, sound and rhythm, its brilliant strength and elegant artistry. I feel disturbed by the flourish of snobbish self-hatred racial discourse, the rough simplified rejection of a nation’s civilization, as well as the strong pressure from the world hierarchical order of modernization. My academic
interest in cultural racism in China is hence generated from my individual experience and daily observation. The wound of colonialism continues bleeding, yet people turn a blind eye to it or think it an outdated topic that belonged to the past century.

**Literature Review**

*Race, Culture and Power*

Race is a concept socially constructed but accepted as a biological truth. It was historically bound up with culture and power. The concept has been once used to explain cultural superiority or inferiority of groups of people, as well as to legitimize a racial group’s dominant position in power relations. When biological racism was in its heyday, the dominant race – the whites – was promised that they were born to be beautiful and wise, civilized and powerful. That is what people read in Georges Cuvier’s writing. The major figure of natural science in the 19th century wrote after a conventional description of physical traits of the Caucasian: “To this variety, the most highly civilized nations, and those which have generally held all others in subjection, are indebted for their origin.” The “all others in subjection” included the Mongolian with a stationary civilization and the Negro race which remained “in the most complete state of utter barbarism” (Count ed., 1950, p. 44). Biological inheritance explained why the blacks and the yellows worked as slaves, while the whites enjoyed the wealth of the world.

After the Second World War and the end of that old colonial era, third-world countries received independence from the colonial masters. Open violence and oppression against people of color were outlawed in many countries. Discrimination with
respect to physical distinctions is considered politically incorrect. Scientific research once was used to support racial hierarchy by measuring skull size of different racial groups to establish a linear relationship between cranial capacity and intelligence (Gould, 1996). Scientists now reject the concept of race as a biological reality (Reilly, Kaufman & Bodino ed., 2003, pp. 8-11). However, when biological and institutional racism was on the wane, cultural racism became the new form to maintain white supremacy, from which the superior racial groups continue to benefit. This time, the “new racism,” or “racism without race,” or “cultural racism,” which emphasizes “cultural” differences instead of “natural” differences, indicates that the lower political, economic and social positions of the minority groups are not a result of structural violence but are determined by their inferior cultures (Ansell, 1997; Blaut, 1992; Goldberg, 2009; Lan, 2006; Weiner, 2012; Wetherell & Potter, 1992).

Power is not necessarily physical violence. Power could be soft and invisible. In the new era of racism, racial groups are turned into cultural groups with specific tradition and culture. People are treated according to their performance and capability. Nonetheless, the power to evaluate group traits and define merit is still kept in the hand of the dominant racial group. As James Blaut argued, the core theory of Eurocentric diffusionism is the underpinning of racism. It asserts Greater Europe is the center of the world, where progress and innovation occurs because of the special traits of the Europeans and then diffuses to the rest of the world later. People could exercise racism without being racist, because the motor of the theory could be changed from biology to culture (Blaut, 1992). Racism is kept alive through discarding biological referents while
maintaining its nucleus – the idea of linearly ranking various cultures to legitimize a power hierarchy. That is why Claude Levi-Strauss claimed from the beginning of *Race and History*, “we cannot therefore claim to have formulated a convincing denial of the inequality of the human races, so long as we fail to consider the problem of the inequality – or diversity – of human cultures” (Levi-Strauss, 1952, p. 7).

To execute power through knowledge and non-violent institutions is not an invention of the era of cultural racism. Literatures of post-colonialism and post-modernism examine the cultural dimension of colonization and language/knowledge as a way to consolidate the West’s domination of the world since the colonial era. Edward Said explores the link between culture and imperialism, indicating, “neither imperialism nor colonialism is a simple act of accumulation and acquisition, both are supported and perhaps even impelled by impressive ideological formations” (Said, 1993, p. 9). According to Said, the role of culture in overseas expansion distinguishes modern European imperialism from other earlier forms of overseas domination. Eurocentrism subordinated people under colonial rule by “banishing their identities from the culture” *(Ibid, p. 222)*. In James Hevia’s case study of the late Qing Dynasty, imperialism is defined as a cultural process or “pedagogical process” rather than just “guns and goods” (Hevia, 2003, pp. 3-4). Through the violence of language and the violence of arms, imperial powers in the 19th century persuaded as well as coerced China to obey the new international rules in a world programmed by the West.

Since the knowledge system of race had been a global hegemonic discourse, not surprisingly, victims of racism accept the oppressive discourse to distinguish the relative
civilized “we” and the more barbarian “others.” The agent who uses race as knowledge to execute power is never limited to the white. Robert E. Washington uses the term “brown racism” to refer to the prejudice among people of color against black people (Washington, 1990, p. 209). Frantz Fanon explores the psychology of the blacks who admire the noble whiteness and seek to be culturally white (Fanon, 2008). Hence, he touches the complex self-hatred feeling among the subject people, the most powerful evidence of the internalized racism in ex-colonial society.

Reviewing the relations between race, culture and power is essential for re-examining two fundamental questions before I present my further argument: Does racism exist in contemporary China? Should China be included in the global history of colonialism and racism? To answer the questions, one should not forget the cultural dimension of both race and power. The following chapters will discuss how racial discourse in China is veiled by the myth of culture, and how racism continues operating through non-violent knowledge institutions as a legacy of imperialism and colonialism.

*Previous Scholarship on Racial Discourse in China*

The study of racial discourse in China is still in its initial stage. From the approach of racial studies, little research has been conducted about racial discrimination in non-Western societies, and the subject of racism is often assumed to be white, while the “colored” people are usually regarded as victims. From the approach of China Studies, race is still examined by the dimension of biology. People do not think Chinese is a “race,” and discriminating an ethnic group for cultural factors is not regarded as racial
discrimination. Furthermore, “Chinese culturalism” caught the most attention from academia, which implies the inherited attitude of Chinese to use culture rather than descent to distinguish themselves from the “others,” a tradition that can be dated back to ancient times (Qian, 1977, p. 35). In addition, China’s great cultural self-esteem, known as Sinocentrism, has been a solid base for the studies on Chinese culture and diplomatic history. Finally, the concept of race is supposed to be deconstructed by the concept of class since the communist takeover of the country.

The sparse academic literature on racial discourse in modern China can be roughly classified in two genres. The first genre focuses on domestic racial tensions between the Han, the majority ethnic group of China, and ethnic minority groups, especially the Manchu, the Uighur, the Tibetan, and the Mongol. The tension between the Han and the Manchu, the founder of the last dynasty of imperial China, composed a main chapter of the Chinese revolution in the roily 20th century. The Han-Tibetan, the Han-Mongol and the Han-Uighur relations have often been strained because of unbalanced socioeconomic conditions, cultural conflicts, and separatist movements. Scholars writing in this genre highlight the state’s ethnic policy and institutional as well as daily ethnic prejudices (Gladney, 1998; Kaltman, 2007; Rhoads, 2000; Wang, 1998; Wang, 2007). The Han, making up 92 percent of the national population, is the group taking the dominant position in political, economic and cultural institutions, and is often criticized for its “Great Han chauvinism” (da Hanzu zhuyi) against ethnic minorities.

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8 These are the four major minority ethnic groups together with Han Chinese constituted the population of China. “Five races under one union” (wu zu gong he) is one of the fundamental principles when the Republic of China is founded in 1911.
Literature in the second genre explores racial tensions between the native Chinese and foreigners. Frank Dikotter’s book published in 1992 is the only systematic study on the theme of racial discourse in China. By reviewing extensive transcripts published in ancient and modern China, Dikotter presents how the concept of race was introduced to China and widely adopted by political and cultural elites as a new worldview since the late 19th century. Indeed, he noticed the feeling of inferiority prevailed in modern China. Nevertheless, most chapters in the book discuss the nation’s xenophobia, its feeling of superiority, and how the nationalist project adopts racial discourse to invoke people to “save the race” (bao zhong). Publications by Barry Sautman (1994; 1997), Richard Lufrano (1994), M Dujon Johnson (2007) and Cheng Yinghong (2011) on racism in China follow the same trend of Dikotter, all focusing on the exclusive aspect of racial discourse. Less attention has been paid to the self-depreciating psychology of the Chinese who have been traumatized by the West’s military and cultural colonization in the modern era, or how the national inner crisis of self-consciousness is expressed by self-loathing racial discourse and recognition of white supremacy.

Studies on Chinese nationalism discuss the discourse of national humiliation in China. Thinking of defeat/failure as humiliation has been a key nationalist strategy adopted by the states (both the Republic of China and the People’s Republic of China) to mobilize people. This strategy gets attention from scholars who notice a resurrection of nationalism in China since the 1990s, and scholars indicate that the communist party is seeking to consolidate its authority by strengthening national identity through patriotic education after the Tiananmen Tragedy (Callahan, 2004 & 2006; Wang, 2008). Scholars,
as well as the Chinese government, share a basic assumption that humiliation education would have a positive effect on nationalism. As Jing Tsu had argued in her analysis of the psychological basis of failure education:

One of the most compelling aspects of failure is the conviction that it is unique to oneself, who alone can both defy and return from the precipice of annihilation…failure achieves that distinct prerequisite of nationalism that perhaps no other positivistic definition can compel, the recognition of a singular destiny that is the foundation of sovereign. (Tsu, 2005, p. 222)

Geremie Barme made a further argument that China was using humiliation discourse to “demand better treatment from the West” (Unger ed., 1996, p. 187).

However, the negative impact of the strategy of “blame the victim” is absent in these discussions, which usually neglects the long-lasting global racial hierarchy as its background.

Scholarship on the approach of intellectual history, cultural history, colonialism and modernization touches more on the inner crisis of identity in China. Lin Yu-sheng (1979) indicates that totalistic iconoclasm is the most crucial feature of the intellectual history of modern China. The profound rejection of traditional culture inevitably bred inner crisis of Chinese consciousness. James Reeve Pusey’s exhaustive research (1983) on the spread and impact of Darwinism and Social Darwinism in China shows how the belief of linear social progress was embraced by the modern Chinese intellectuals who painfully struggled to figure out the direction for the nation in unprecedented crisis. James Hevia works on exploring the ritual conflicts between the British Empire and China (Hevia, 1995). The latter was defeated and drifted into the English classroom to
learn the new ritual of the world, and it is still haunted by the imperialist pedagogy today (Hevia, 2003).

It should be emphasized, that although some of the above research focuses on the time period of the early 20th century, the conclusions are still effective for the research of the post-Mao era. They are still effective because China is still on its way to modernization, and because the bankruptcy of communism produced a vacuum of mainstream values again, making the competition between various ideologies possible.

Methodological Reflections

Based on in-depth qualitative study, my research is a case study to provide new material to the study of race from a comparative perspective. As I have mentioned in the section of personal inquisitiveness, I do the research as a participant observer because racial discourse has been an ordinary daily discourse for Chinese. Materials used in the study are a part of my daily experience. My generation is living in a society where Western lifestyle and ideology triumphs. I explore the implications of this for race and racism in the Chinese context.

My analysis of racial discourse in the post-Mao era is based on a wide range of source material, covering both first-hand and second-hand resources. The first-hand materials I use to analyze racial practice and related political attitudes include books, articles, news reports, online forum posts, blog articles and micro-blog posts (Weibo), speeches and political manifestos, personal memoirs, etc. The second-hand resources include news reports, surveys, journal articles and books published on the topic of racial
conflict and sentiment in China, Western cultural hegemony, and ancient and modern Chinese intellectual history.

I collect materials from both traditional publications and the internet. The latter has become the major platform for citizens’ daily communication, dissidents’ online gathering and intellectuals’ publication. I observe individuals and groups with different cultural identities and political preferences. I pay attention to voices from the “left-wing” or “right-wing” or “centrist,” individual complaints as well as organized protests, and debates between public opinion leaders as well as quarrels among grassroots “netizens” – the citizens of the internet. Racial discourse is kept alive and internalized within society through daily exercises. My paper aims to represent the context in which agents made their various arguments, rather than simply drag out the agents from their contexts and label them as racist.

Case study and content analysis are adopted to examine these transcripts published mainly but not limited to the past three decades. I choose liberal dissident Liu Xiaobo’s writing, as well as a widely circulated fake report in the name of a U.S. think tank RAND Corporation, to examine the self-hatred psychology in post-Mao Chinese society. In the analysis of anti-Manchu sentiment, I review the case of Yan Chongnian, a scholar who was attacked by a Hanist for his academic idea of praising the Qing regime founded by the Manchus, as well as the writings of the chief anti-Manchu critics on the internet. The section of white privilege and brown racism focuses on the racial discrimination in the Chinese job market, especially in the ESL industry, as well as
campus racial demonstration in the 1980s and cyber racism in the internet era against blacks.

Although the rapid development of information technology and new mass media has greatly leveled the ground for speech, urban elites with more social capital still take a more advanced position in the competition of message delivery. Hence, most of my sources are naturally the product of the urban educated population. Furthermore, not all the materials discussed in this study come from the mainland China, because racial discourse is a global hegemonic knowledge system. One of the major concerns in my paper is to reveal how voice and idea flows beyond national boundary and is magnified through a global hierarchical knowledge circulation. The following chapter will reflect how the West maintains its authority through media outlets, non-governmental organizations and other knowledge production institutions. It is not even necessary for the West to actively perform in the knowledge circulation and information exchange because people in third world countries spontaneously borrow the authority of the West to support their arguments.

Research Significance

What is the significance of a study on racial discourse in contemporary China? Literature on racism in non-Western societies is still in the incipient stage. However, that should not be the primary answer to the question. Lack of literature may prove a topic is lack of worth for studying. In the case of China, the fact that both domestic residents and foreign observers are less sensitive to the racial discourse in China fully supports the idea
that China, different from the U.S., does not have a history of violent institutional racism, a national legacy of slavery, nor been a nation of immigrants.

Nevertheless, it is necessary to discuss racial discourse in China as a separate topic, because it provides a special perspective to re-examine the narration of Chinese nationalism and China’s modernization. For a long time, the image of China has been shaped by previous studies directed by Chinese ethnocentrism. The popular international notion of “the Rise of China” and the distrust of the communist regime imply a powerful and aggressive China, denying China’s disadvantage in the complex historical relations of coercion, which had been and is still dominated by the West. Furthermore, by using development and modernization as the mainstream paradigm in history study, there is an emphasis on the West’s positive impact on the periphery countries, but at the same time, this approach plays down the sufferings that occurred during the destruction and reconstruction of economic, social and cultural institutions in social transformation.

Hence, we confront a question by examining racial discourses in China: What does it mean when China, a recognized rising power, defines itself as “backward” and believes it is shameful to be backward? Had humiliation only facilitated a nation’s success by provoking the people’s anger? Critical racial theory will provide a chance to re-evaluate China’s cultural inner crisis. Behind the anxiety of “being backward” is an internalized belief that cultures could be linearly ranked and there is only one way out from the bottom. The psychology of inferiority might be gradually eased with the increase of economic and military power. However, when China finally reaches a stable
self-identity and regains its cultural confidence in the future, would it imagine the “others” in the old framework of cultural hierarchy and power relations?

In turn, the case of China will provide new materials to examine critical racial theory in a global context. Although scholars (Dikotter, 1992; Duara, 1995; Hevia, 2003) were keenly aware that racial discourse would survive in other forms and continue to influence China, the evolvement of racism in contemporary China may be well beyond their speculation. Exhibiting a more complex spectrum of voices rather than making an opposition between the communist authority and the liberal dissidents, my thesis analyzes racial discourse’s ability to combine different historical and political viewpoints. A language of oppression might be accepted and survive in the name of liberation. A language of liberation might be used to produce new oppression. In recognizing this complex reality, we may achieve a deeper understanding of the global project of decolonization.
CHAPTER 2: RACIAL DISCOURSE VARIATIONS: A LIMITED IMAGINATION OF THE WORLD

By reviewing three variations of popular racial discourse in the post-Mao era, this chapter will show how the discourse of Western colonialism continues to operate in Chinese society. The imagination of privileged racial groups shapes people’s perception of the world, and influences the way people interpret history, imagine the future, identify themselves and treat others. Self-loathing emotion, anti-Manchu sentiment and discrimination against people of color – these variations of racial discourses develop from the same understanding of “racial backwardness.” People feel anxious about being backward and they express contempt to groups that are considered more backward. The perspective they have to observe the world is limited by the filter of existing cultural hierarchy.

To avoid misunderstanding, certain distinctions need to be clarified before I start my narration. First, it is necessary to distinguish racism from ethnocentrism. Ella Shohat and Robert Stam have made a clear enumeration of what is not racism: “to see the world through the lenses provided by one’s own culture is not necessarily racist, nor is it racist simply to notice physical or cultural differences, or to detest specific members of a group, or even to dislike the cultural traits of specific groups” (Shohat & Stam, 1994, p. 22). Racism is using biological or cultural traits to explain individual performance of the members of a group, or classifying certain cultural traits as backward or advanced to legitimize the abuse of power. Racism is also not necessarily large-scale group oppression organized by the state, but could be practiced in daily individual prejudice.
Secondly, as Blaut (1992) had indicated, racism is not necessarily directed by prejudice. People who practice racism may simply believe “they are dealing with facts” and “there are straightforward empirical reasons grounded in cultural difference, which explain why some groups and individuals are backward.” Such unconsciousness facilitates racism’s survival and variant in the post-colonial era.

Inferior Chinese: Self-hatred Racial Discourse

Seven days after the National Day of PRC, Chinese writer and human rights activist Liu Xiaobo was awarded the 2010 Nobel Peace Prize for his “long and non-violent struggle for fundamental human rights in China.”9 Having been a key participator in the 1989 Tiananmen Protest, and the leading author of Charter 08, a manifesto of human rights, Liu’s resume presents an ideal image of a fighter for democracy and freedom under the cruel pressure of authority. Liu was arrested in 2009 and later put in prison under the charge of “inciting subversion of state power.” Sending the political dissident to prison for his political views and activities placed a crown on his head. Less than five months after his imprisonment, Liu became the first Chinese citizen to be awarded a Nobel Prize, enjoying high reputation for his non-violent resistance against the state.

As Barry Sautman and Yan Hairong (2011) indicated, the media only reported two arguments on this issue. The Chinese government’s official statement accused Liu of

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being a criminal who “desecrated the prize,”\textsuperscript{10} while Liu’s supporters, including the majority of international media reporters, described him as a heroic liberalist against the totalitarian tyranny. A third position went unacknowledged, that the Chinese state’s sentence of Liu was a mistake, but Liu also did not deserve the prize.\textsuperscript{11} Indeed, one might be shocked by Liu’s fierce critique of Chinese culture and neocolonial arguments when examining his political comments. Liu made his most controversial statement in an interview made by a Hong Kong journalist in 1988:

Is it possible to transform China fundamentally?
A: No. It is impossible even if one or two rulers resolve to do so. We do not have the soil.
Q: Then, in what condition might China realize a real historical transformation?
A: Three hundred years of colonialism. It cost Hong Kong a hundred years to become today’s Hong Kong. China is so large; we definitely need at least three hundred years. I even doubt if three hundred years will be enough…
Q: Do you mean China still has to take the path of Hong Kong?
A: But history will never give such a chance to China. The era of colonialism has passed. No one is willing to accept such a burden as China anymore.\textsuperscript{12}

Such an argument even violates “political correctness” in the West today. The open endorsement of colonialism made by the famous liberalist seems more or less awkward and embarrassing for the sympathetic international audiences of democracy and human rights. This may explain why the international journalists ignored this topic in their news reports, while the Chinese government used this openly endorsement of colonialism to question Liu’s credibility.\textsuperscript{13}

\textsuperscript{13} Search “Liu Xiaobo” in LexisNexis Academic database, there are 999 results. By adding “Nobel Prize” and “democracy” to rule out people with the same name, there are still 960 results left. However, there are only 20 results
Had Liu, indicating he has “no enemies, no hatred,” felt regret for this radical statement? He reviewed this interview in 2006:

Although my impromptu answer had been used by the authority as the main evidence to legitimize their persecution of me as well as the patriotic angry youth (aiguo fenqing) to criticize my “treason,” I would not use “it was an unthinking answer in interview” as an excuse to explain my utterance which had offended so many people. I especially do not want to take it back in today’s China, where nationalism holds the high ground of public discourse. It is just an extreme expression of my unwavering belief, that China could only achieve modernization by a long period of Westernization.14

This straightforward statement illustrates Blaut’s sharp observation: Liu is one of the people who simply believe “they are dealing with facts.” For Liu, the fact is colonization brings progress to the world:

From the perspective of historical development, the modern West’s settlement of backward nations is a progress. Colonization pushes forward modernization around the world. It opens closed areas and expands commodity and cultural markets. It makes the different areas in the world, especially the East and the West, become open to each other and no longer isolated. Thus, colonization brought the idea of human rights, equality, freedom, democracy and competition, which used to be the special traits of the West, to the world.15

He admitted colonization is a brutal process, yet “the Western colonists were not more brutal than the local dictators.”16 Furthermore, without colonization, “those backward and ignorant nations under closed authoritarian rule would never breed the demand of democracy and science.” In the case of China, “the Chinese would never recognize this fact without the Opium War, that there was a far more powerful culture in

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the world, and would not feel shameful for being backward. They would not seek to reform, but be immersed in the dream of Sinocentrism.”

The discourses of colonialism, liberalism and nationalism dramatically intertwined together in Liu’s mind. Behind Liu’s endorsement of colonialism is his faith in democracy and anxiety of being backward. If colonialism could introduce liberalism, the most advanced human civilization, then the pain and struggle within the process would be acceptable as a price for progress. He holds a firm belief in the superiority of Western civilization and the inferiority of Chinese culture: “the difference between Westernization and the existing institutions in China is the difference between human and non-human. If people want to live as a human being, then a thorough Westernization would be the only choice.” Examining his writings from 1986 to 2008, excluding his resistance against the one-party state, another main theme of his thinking had been critiques of the corrupted Chinese culture. Indeed, he achieved his early fame because of his harsh criticism of Chinese culture. Liu suggested considering the state as an evil flower blossomed from the root of Chinese culture: “I cannot say it is the fault of some corrupted rulers leading to the backwardness of China. Every individual was responsible because institutions were created by themselves.” It is these snobbish, shallow, ruthless, ignorant and slavish subjects raised by abnormal Chinese culture maintaining the

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18 Liu defined himself as a nationalist, although he expressed disgust to the popular nationalist discourse. Nationalist as a critic is a common position held by many Chinese intellectuals.
20 Ibid.
tyranny. The complete skepticism of national culture finally leads to questioning the racial quality of the Chinese: “I admit my study of Chinese culture was cornered... The nation lacks creativity... I cannot find explanation. Maybe we should trace back from institutions and culture to race.”

Liu’s argument is an example of self-hated racial discourse in China, which includes these key features: 1) Chinese culture is inferior to the Western culture (or the Euro-American culture) because it lacks certain traits, including individualism, religious and scientific tradition, the love of equality, liberty and courage, sense of competition and progress, etc. 2) The Chinese nation has a rotten national character (guomin liegenxing), including ignorance, slavishness, selfishness, ruthlessness, greedy, hypocrisy, arrogance, etc. 3) The flawed culture and ill national character is the real cause of China’s failure and backwardness in the modern era. In this sense, Western colonialism is acceptable and even welcomed because it brings advanced “humanistic” culture to cure backward and barbarian countries.

Liu has never been the only one in his generation who struggles in the deep anxiety of being “non-human.” This anxiety became the impetus of the new enlightenment movement in the 1980s, and later led to the birth of Charter 08. This is why the manifesto talked about “joining the mainstream of civilized nations” and “the obsolescence of China’s system of government,” without mentioning a word of the

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21 Check these arguments at http://www.chinesepen.org/Article/hyxz/200810/Article_20081018001847.shtml, http://blog.boxun.com/hero/liuxb/487_1.shtml. Ironically, he made this argument in the article titled “Do Chinese people only deserve party-directed democracy?”

colonial past. In Chen Kuide’s speech at an awards ceremony for the charter’s signatories, he stated the text as: “[the charter] proves that Chinese people are not alien or a special group divorced from civilized human beings….Chinese people are also human beings, not special species…”

Charter 08 could prove Chinese people are not “non-human,” which implies the idea that an unenlightened person is not complete. Hence, it is not surprising to read a harsh scolding of the Chinese in other publications: “China is a nation of killers who could commit all the sins. There is nothing that can save the country except the power of God…The nation of China is a nation of scum and should be cursed forever” (Ren, 2005, pp. 312-346). Writer Moluo, who was once regarded by the liberalists as “the fighter of Chinese intelligentsia,” became famous for the publication of the book Chiruzhe zhi shouji (Notes of the Humiliated) in 1998. In this essay collection, he argued that people should discuss the people rather than the culture of China. He cried out:

The most miserable fact is we are not human beings at all….I wish I could have 1.1 billion fingers to point at every Chinese’s flat nose and shout: you are not human; you are non-human. You are the swine, the worm, and the ugliest enemy of human beings. Let us be thoroughly eliminated, all the non-humans should be thoroughly eliminated. (Moluo, 1998, p. 229)

Of course, these emotional, breast-beating sentences should not be read as harbingers of institutional racial violence. Rather, they reflect the writers’ deep anxiety about being backward and uncivilized and ask for change, improvement, enlightenment, and revival: “The very premise of being a real human is to recognize oneself is non-

23 Charter 08. (2008). Retrieved 9/17, 2013, from http://www.charter08.eu/2.html. Compare the Charter 08 and the Constitution of PRC, one will find the two texts have very different perspectives to review the history of Modern China and the relations between China and the West.
human and to admit the ugliness of being non-human” (Ibid, p. 232). It is from this perspective, these dissidents, as well as the scholars observing them, believing the self-humiliating racial discourse should be explained as a variation of nationalism and liberalism. Dikotter concludes that:

Humiliation implied a sense of collective responsibility. The cause of failure could be attributed to the nation’s lack of effort or ability, not to external factors independent of human will. It promoted voluntarist strategies of national revenge...It mobilized patriotism, promoted national solidarity, and addressed the sense of collective responsibility. (Dikotter, 1996, p. 602)

For Chen Xiaomei, the enterprising construction of an ideal West by the generation of Liu Xiaobo should be regarded as anti-official Occidentalism, “a powerful anti-official discourse using the [ideal] Western Other as a metaphor for a political liberation against ideological oppression within a totalitarian society”; hence, “arguing absolutely against cultural imperialism in the international arena can be politically dangerous since it inevitably, if unintentionally, supports the status quo of a ruling ideology” (Chen, 2002, pp. 5-6).

Nevertheless, a disturbing mindset does exist in these liberal dissidents’ desperate argument, which tends to neglect the rich details and complexity of human history and believes a group could be flattened into a set of unique traits, and these traits could be used as index to evaluate the group as good or bad, backward or advanced, barbarian or civilized. As Arif Dirlik indicated, in the long run, this cultural essentialization would consolidate the existing ideological hegemony and balance of power by “internalizing the historical assumptions of orientalism” (Dirlik, 1996, p. 113). Furthermore, the defense made by scholars like Chen to argue that a discourse of oppression could be used as a
discourse of liberation also significantly underestimates the negative effects of such self-deprecation. Here I ask: Why do we only analyze a crisis by seeing it as a chance? Why would people believe blaming the victim is a meaningful strategy for the victim’s “grow-up”? Why are people so confident that the discourse of oppression would not be abused when they use it as a discourse of liberation? Why would people like Liu Xiaobo, who was bothered by the “arrogant” nationalists in China, think the most effective way to balance the noise of nationalism is resorting to colonialism? When we talk about a nation, do we have another choice beside self-boasting and self-loathing?

The fact is China in the post-Mao era witnesses a flooding of self-hatred racial discourse, which could not be regarded simply as a political discourse used by political and cultural elites or a variation of nationalism as well as liberalism.\(^\text{25}\) Citizens get used to hearing and using self-loathing racial discourse in everyday life. They accept the shallow, cowardly but also boastful peasant literary figure Ah Q, created by Lu Xun, as the best figure to represent “Chineseness.”\(^\text{26}\) They approve of Bai Yang’s assertion of the “the ugly Chinese,” who gained a strong reputation in the Chinese-speaking world because of his fierce attack on Chinese culture. They acknowledge “Chinese are low in quality/aptitude” (Zhongguoren jiu shi suzhi cha) as a knee-jerk complaint of others’ annoying behavior.\(^\text{27}\) They tend to relate individual habit or performance, especially

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\(^\text{25}\) Chinese intellectual Wang Xiaodong is usually regarded as a representative of Chinese nationalists in the post-Mao era. He might be the first Chinese scholar who argues the self-hatred discourses should be considered as a racial issue. The term he uses to define the phenomenon of self-deprecation and worship of the West in China is “reverse racism” (nixiang zhongzu zhuai).


\(^\text{27}\) Suzhi is usually translated as “quality,” but this translation cannot catch the nuance of the word in original context. To say someone is high in suzhi implies this person has a superior position in cultural hierarchy and deserves better treatment. See Kipnis. A. (2006). Suzhi: A Keyword Approach. The China Quarterly, 186, pp. 295-313.
improper behavior, with national depravity, and even accept the idea that discrimination against the Chinese is understandable because of their despicable behavior.\textsuperscript{28} However, self-hatred racial discourse is not only adopted by the liberal dissidents. It becomes a popular reason to support existing political institutions because “Chinese people do not deserve democracy, they are too low in quality and will just produce chaos.” Paradoxically, liberalists like Liu Xiaobo support electoral democracy, but agree with the judgment of the quality of the Chinese. In their mind, the fact that people endure the state just proves the slavishness of this nation.

Living in the anxiety of identifying the Chinese as a race being “low in quality” everyday creates great tension on the mind. This tension explains why the netizens became so angry when a tourist was found scrawling his name on the wall of an Egyptian temple. They tracked down and disclosed the personal information of the tourist, a 15-year-old boy, on the internet, and even hacked his school’s website to exert pressure on the family to apologize.\textsuperscript{29} Here we do find “the sense of collective responsibility,” the strong sense of belonging, and feeling individual behavior that belongs to and represents the group. But the reinforcement of inner group connections is achieved at the cost of the depreciation of the group. Disparaging the Chinese is a phenomenon so widespread that sometimes it triggers ridiculous stories. For example, in 2013, a foreign exerciser in Shanghai happened to rescue a young woman who tried to drown herself in the river.

\textsuperscript{28} When the Zadig & Voltaire was forced to apologize for the designer’s improper statement that his boutique hotel would not welcome Chinese tourists, some people in China insisted this should not be regarded as racial discrimination because “Chinese tourists are unwelcomed not because their descent but rude behavior.” See the news at http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/news/regions/europe/france/121005/zadig-voltaire-thierry-gillier-apologizes-chinese-tourists-not-welcome-paris-hotel, and the quarrel at http://www.weibo.com/1664443865/9ENLDDfm7.

Nonetheless, a rumor spread quickly on Weibo, saying that the crowd nearby did not help the rescue, but seized the opportunity to steal the belongings of the exerciser. “How awful the fucking Chinese are!” The post concluded. With the scold, the rumor was forwarded tens of thousands of times. It was later clarified as fake. However, the psychology behind this type of rumor is worth pondering. It should not be regarded as an isolated incident, but a typical example reflecting the abuse of self-hatred discourse in China.

Examining how people use the image of the West in the construction and diffusion of self-hatred racial discourse in China would help us gain a better understanding of the existing power relations. The West, dominating the global cultural hierarchy, is involved in this process not only as an ideal model/scale to measure China, but also as a senior speaker to magnify certain voices to attract and persuade an audience. As a result, a bunch of false stories intend to humiliate the Chinese were posted in the name of famous persons or organizations in the West. A typical example is the case of “RAND Corporation’s report on China.”

In 2010, an online posting titled as “RAND Corporation's evaluation of Chinese people” became a hotspot forwarded tens of thousands of times by various websites and blogs. After introducing RAND Corporation as “the world NO.1 think tank, the most famous agency in the U.S. for policy consultation,” it listed seven conclusions of the traits of Chinese people: 1) Chinese people do not know their duty to the society and the country. Chinese culture is established on kinship rather than on rationality, encouraging people to be selfish and callous. 2) China is one of the few hideous countries that do not

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have religion, so people do not have a unified sense of morality or truth, or sense of guilty. This encourages mercilessness and indifference. 3) Politics in China is made up only of betrayal and cheating. China has never been a society governed by law, because it does not fit into their way of thinking. 4) Most Chinese people never learn decent behavior, but living for keeping “face.” They do not have the courage to pursue the right thing or the ability to figure out what is right. 5) They build values upon selfishness. They learn how to lie and take things from others rather than share. Because of greed, they could embrace the dark side of capitalism to seek power and wealth but do not care about environmental pollution. 6) They are preoccupied by the animal instincts to seek food and sex, paying little attention to spiritual life. 7) Chinese education is a total failure. People may learn knowledge and technology, but they cannot develop good character.31

This report is a lengthy collection and repetition of clichés about “Chinese national character,” which may explain its unparalleled popularity.32 It had been edited into several editions with different titles. Each of them won a large number of audiences. However, it was not written by the RAND Corporation. The think tank had to dispel the rumor several times on their official website that they never published these “extremely negative comments about the Chinese people.”33 The so-called “RAND report” was indeed translated and modified from a post “What is China” on an American online forum in 2004.34 The original post was deleted because of racial discrimination. However,

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31 An example of the online post could be read at http://bbs.tianya.cn/post-develop-486239-1.shtml.
32 This article was so popular that even my parents who did not often use computer had read it. They made a copy of the text and sent it to me via e-mail, thinking it made good arguments worth reading.
34 A netizen Wujian did the work to track down the real author of the post, which was post on forums.military.com by “kakarudo”, a Hong Kong student, in 2004. He then found the post should be the work of “Kenji Asahara,” who might be a Taiwanese. Check the posts at http://www.here4news.com/article/345790 and
members of a Chinese online forum who claim to be “the traitors to the Chinese” (*hanjian*) that “brainwash those ‘angry youth’ (*fenqing*, a derogatory slang for Chinese nationalist),” translated it into Chinese.\(^3^5\) From 2005 on, different versions of the translation started circulating on the internet, forwarded by various websites, online forums and blogs.

In the same year, a translation of the RAND Corporation’s testimony of “China and Globalization” was also published online. The original testimony was a defense of the positive effects of China’s participation and success in globalization. It argued that “In 2020, [China] will still be a very poor country by our standards,” so the development of China would not be a threat to U.S. security.\(^3^6\) However, by piecing together RAND’s evaluation of China’s disadvantages in economic development, an abridged and misinterpreted version of the report was born, with a title “RAND Corporation: China will become very poor in 2020.”\(^3^7\) Later, this version was edited into the translation of “What is China,” forming a new popular article named as “RAND Corporation's evaluation of Chinese people.” In 2010, someone edited the article again by deleting the quotes from the testimony and adding more quotes from “What is China,” producing the final version. Searching the title on baidu.com, the main search engine in China, there are 687,000 search results. The circulation of the article was not stopped by RAND’s official statement, or by Chinese netizen’s findings of the real source of the report, but instead,

\(^{35}\) Check the original post at http://www.rxhj.net/phpBB2/viewtopic.php?t=1703.
circulation further developed more versions with diffusion. In 2012, a college president put a post on Weibo, which was later forwarded more than eight thousand times:

Hillary Clinton’s comment on China: After 20 years China would be the poorest country in the world! 1) Chinese people do not know their duty to society and their country. 2) China is one of the few hideous countries that do not have religion. 3) Politics in China is only betrayal and cheating. 4) Most Chinese people never learn decent behavior.

Another post forwarded more than three thousand times was also a quote from the report, but this time claimed to be the comment made by Richard Nixon:

President Richard Nixon’s comment on Chinese people: “What Chinese people lack the most is not wisdom, but a character of courage and integrity.” Most of them are just spongers good at examination but never care about truth or morality. They are preoccupied by the animal instincts to seek food and sex.

In the internet era, exchange of information occurs in high frequency far beyond geographic boundary. Power relations infiltrate into and are strengthened by this exchange process, both consciously and unconsciously. In the case of Liu Xiaobo, the West takes an active role through financial, media and public opinion support. In the case of the RAND report, the West did not perform actively, but people could feel its authority everywhere. The U.S. think tank, Hillary Clinton, President Nixon, text written in English and posts in the American online forum – all of these were borrowed to add to the article’s credibility. Writing, translating, publishing and transmitting – all of these activities were occurring under the gaze of the West, the quiet, actionless hegemony.

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There is little doubt that the popularity of this false report first and foremost reflects the audience’s dissatisfaction with their life. Ideas in the report resonate with the audience, or they would not argue that although the article lies on the author, the main arguments are still worth the read. Yet the problem is a general insensitivity to humiliating racial discourse. Reading these sentences, they might be reminded of the personal experience that had aroused their anger, depression and disappointment. Encouraged by the paradigm of “national character critique,” these negative emotions generate and interweave with each other, drowning the nation in self-loathing sentiment, in the name of liberation.

Resurgence of Anti-Manchu Sentiment

In the fall of 2008, Chinese historian Yan Chongnian went to Wuxi for a book signing. The seventy-four-year-old scholar was the former director of the Manchu Research Institute at Beijing Academy of Social Sciences. He became famous among the public because of a program Lecture Room (Baijia jiangtan) on CCTV, the state-owned national television network. His lectures on anecdotes of emperors in Qing Dynasty achieved great success in 2004. In subsequent years, he continued the work of television lectures and published books based on the lectures, all of which became best-sellers.

An unexpected incident occurred in the book signing. A thirty-year-old man named Huang Haiqing waited in the line of readers. When he approached Yan, he suddenly slapped the scholar’s face twice. The offender was pulled away quickly by the
bookstore security, condemning the historian as a “traitor to the Han Chinese” who “deserves it.”

Yan Chongnian was attacked because of his academic ideas. He adopts the paradigm of “great unification” (dayitong) to examine the collapse of the Ming Dynasty, the last dynasty ruled by ethnic Han Chinese, and the establishment of the Qing Dynasty, a dynasty ruled by the Manchus, arguing the latter is a result of the unification between ethnic groups. However, in Huang Haiqing’s opinion, Yan’s idea whitewashes Manchus’ brutal rule of China.

Huang was detained by the police for fifteen days for his illegal act. After his release, he used the web-name “Great Wind of Han” (dahanzhifeng) to post a statement online, explaining why he planned this action. He argued that Yan not only defined genocide against the Han Chinese as cultural fusion in his books and lectures, but also refused to give responses to his critique. Hence, his action was not Han-Chauvinistic, but a warning of justice and civilization to whoever uses media hegemony to endorse barbaric and reactionary values.

Behind the slapping incident is a resurgence of anti-Manchuism among the urban non-elite youth. Many of them supported Huang’s actions and regarded him as a hero. However, the Qing regime had been overthrown for one century. The Manchus are recognized as one of the ethnic minority groups after the founding of the PRC and get corresponding supports and protections prescribed by law. Although the Manchus and the Qing history has become a hotspot of the popular cultural and ethnic identity of the

Manchus, which has gradually strengthened since 1980s, this ethnic group has already highly assimilated to the Han Chinese (Rhoads, 2000, pp. 277-281). Very few of them can speak their ancestral language or keep their original lifestyle. Unlike the Tibetans or the Uighurs, the Manchus do not have strong intentions for independence or radical territorial dispute. Why did we witness the resurgence of anti-Manchuism?

James Leibold (2010) used this case to discuss Han supremacism on the internet. He indicated that the youth are enthusiastic in re-defining the Han ethnic group and hence become challenges to the state. They feel the current state’s ethnic policy has distorted and “emptied” the identity of the Han, and argues that the affirmative action policy, especially involving education and population policies that allow minority ethnic groups who go to college with much lower scores and have more than one child, is reverse racism against Han Chinese. Leibold’s study is a keen observation and detailed narration of the youth’s effort to “revive the Han Chinese.” I will further examine their anti-Manchuiism discourse to find out how they use discourse of cultural superiority to shape group identity and how vocabularies of modernity are borrowed to fill the discourse. By putting the discussion of domestic ethnic relations into the context of global racial hierarchy, we will find that the anti-Manchu sentiment is a different strategy to ease the anxiety of “being backward.”

The rhetoric of anti-Manchuism in the post-Mao era includes these basic arguments: The so-called “rotten Chinese culture and flawed national character,” which is responsible for China’s failing in the modern era, should be regarded as the result of the

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Manchus’ barbaric reign of China. The Han, as the original residents in China, is a civilized group with a brilliant culture. Without the Manchus’ brutal interruption, the Han Chinese with all the traits of modernity should have developed capitalism and democracy the same as Western developed countries.

To prove these assumptions, the Hanists made comparison between the last two dynasties in China: the Ming, the last Han regime, and the Qing, the Manchu regime. The title of a long paper written by a netizen Jialin made this argument clear: “Using historical comparison of the Ming and the Qing to explore the reason for China’s backwardness: Critique of the Qing is a necessary condition for China’s national rejuvenation.” This 231-page paper is ambitious to prove the Ming dynasty is not a closed autocracy, but an era fermenting modernization. According to Jialin, with active introduction of Western scientific knowledge, a strong military power armed with gunpowder and naval technique, a booming domestic and international business, a trend of human liberation in philosophy and a well-developed bureaucracy’s strong restriction on imperial power, China in the Ming dynasty is not a backward country with a slavish people, but a country marching forward to economic, military, scientific and political modernization as the economic center of the world.44

However, the Hanists argued that, the germination of modernization was interrupted by the invasion of the savage Manchus. Arisen from the northeastern frontier of China, the group of hunting nomads finally conquered the whole country in the mid-seventeenth century. Pillages and massacres of civilians occurred in many cities, especially in southern China, within the course of military conquest. The Han were also

forced to change their hairstyle and dress in accordance with the Manchu customs. People who refused to do so would be killed as rebels. Being the “alien” minority group, the Manchu rulers were extremely sensitive to the Han’s rebellion, hence using literary inquisition to punish people who expressed nostalgia for the Ming dynasty or ridiculed the Manchus as barbarian. Books against the Qing regime were destroyed. Books published long before the Qing Dynasty which could remind people of alien rule were censored or banned. According to the Hanists, it is the Manchus’ political violence and cultural oppression against the Han that produces a slavish nation. Furthermore, they believed that the fear of the majority ethnic group’s rebellion also explained why the emperors in the Qing Dynasty decided to close the country and stop offshore activity. In other words, the Manchus’ dark rule of China caused these consequences:

1) It stopped scientific progress and made it lag behind; 2) stifled enlightenment in China; 3) stopped economic development and blocked productivity; 4) caused a thorough degeneration of Chinese civilization; 5) misled contemporary cognition of Chinese culture and history; 6) distorted the historical view and cultural outlook of Chinese people.  

Duchebei, as one of the most influential anti-Manchu critics on the internet claims that the reason China did not develop capitalism and was backward in the modern era is a pseudo-question:

Imagine this situation for a minute: if England and West Europe in its budding period of capitalism also experienced a barbaric conquest like China had experienced – residents in the wealthiest cities were massacred, every man had to make a choice between his hair or head, everyone lived under the threat of literary inquisition, in twenty years people were not allowed to live near the coast, and eighty to ninety percent of coastal residents were killed…would they develop capitalism anymore?  

\[\text{Ibid}\]

\[45\]

Manchu men wear a special hairstyle: shaving off the hair on the front of the head and braiding the rest of the hair. After the conquest, the Han Chinese men were forced to wear this hairstyle, or they would be killed. The long braid later became the most distinctive trait of the Chinese, derided as “pig-tail” and the mark of savage by the foreign
The rhetoric of the anti-Manchu sentiment and homogenous interpreting of Chinese society and Western society, with no doubt, is a modern product borrowed from the West. The ancestors living in the “golden age” in these Hanists’ imagination never use a similar scale to evaluate their contemporaries and ancestors. Indeed, the fundamental difference is they never explain the rise and fall of dynasties with a linear progressive historical view, which is the product of Western enlightenment. Ancient China does have a strong tradition of a sense of cultural superiority, believing itself as the center of the world, both in space and in civilization. However, elites in the pre-modern era neither use the idea of “progress” to define achievements or set up goals in the dimension of society, nor do they ever use progress in science or the amount of international trade as an index to assess an emperor’s performance. The Han intellectuals agreed to cooperate with the new regime because the emperors of the Qing declared they would follow the Confucian doctrine, rather than various modern principles, to govern the country.

Furthermore, I want to indicate that “the disputes between Manchu and Han” (Man Han zhi zheng) is still in essence “the disputes between China and the West” (Zhong xi zhi zheng). The urban non-elite Hanists share the anxiety of “being backward” with the liberal iconoclasts. They remain the same on many basic assumptions. Both of them are dissatisfied with reality. Both of them adopt a linear progressive historical view, and admit that China in the modern era is a backward and corrupted nation in an inferior position. Both of them believe there is only one path to modernization or civilization, and imperialists. The article could be read at http://bbs.tiexue.net/post2_4006590_1.html.
feel China has strayed away from that path. They also achieve consensus that a nation could be essentialized by several traits. Only with certain traits could a nation be approved as civilized, which legitimizes the nation’s domination of a territory. Indeed, the only difference between these Hanists with high self-esteem and the iconoclasts with strong self-hatred is deciding who should be blamed for China’s failure: the Manchus, or the Han.

Because of their homogenous understanding of culture, a self-hatred iconoclast could switch sides to become a Hanist. Duchebie’s personal confession is a frank narration of such psychological change:

The criticism and negation of Chinese culture had been carved into my heart and fused with my mind since my youth. I always despised those who endorse Chinese culture and use the five-thousand-year-civilization to justify national pride. I felt a spiritual superiority because I believed I was standing in a much higher position. People like me had shaped this very basic standpoint in youth: The May Fourth Movement’s thorough denouncement of Chinese culture and complete discrediting of Confucius is valid and encouraging. The root of China’s backwardness is Chinese culture itself, which is the heavy burden that interrupted China’s progress. Without discarding the burden, China could never forge ahead. And the progress of China is just a part of the progress of human beings. There is nothing regretful to discard Chineseness, so long as we could achieve the progress of human beings. However, I change my mind now. It is a reversal of my mind! Confucius should be respected, and the Chinese Classics should be studied…Is this a betrayal of the past?…My answer is: Definitely no! The reversal of mind has a prerequisite: to launch a most thorough, severe and ruthless criticism of the Manchus’ reign of China, and a full disclosure and elaboration of the great impairment as the result of the reign. Without this prerequisite, the change of attitude toward traditional national culture is meaningless and unacceptable…Without the generation of Lu Xun’s severe criticism and negation of Chinese culture, we cannot achieve a further understanding of the Qing’s harm. Although our current argument seems like a denial of Lu Xun and his fellows, it indeed inherits and promotes their arguments in internal logic.⁴⁷

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Hence, it is a switch from blaming the Chinese to blaming the Manchus. The Hanist believes he has found the real convict, and China would not achieve its resurgence before the real convict was overthrown. The Manchus had killed the embryo of capitalism in China by its inferior culture. And if people continue to regard the Qing as an inheritor of the Ming, then Chinese culture would be distorted as a culture in continued degradation, so the current harsh criticism and destruction would be justified. Duchebie argued that the Cultural Revolution and Mao Zedong’s tyranny is a result of the pernicious vestige of the Manchus’ rule, an argument similar to the liberals’ belief that the dictatorship of CCP is the result of the pernicious vestige of Chinese traditional culture. “The most thrilling finding of the Cultural Revolution is feudal autocracy revived in the name of revolution,” said Jin Guantao, one of the most influential Chinese scholars of the 1980s. This is why iconoclasm again becomes a major theme of the post-Mao era among Chinese liberalists.

In the system using cultural progress (or level of modernity, for that matter) as the primary qualification for a legitimate reign, being backward means to open the door for contempt and colonial conquest. This is why another influential critic Yidaoshandian claims “1840 is the year when dawn finally begins,” because compared to the Western imperialists who brought modernization to the East Asia, the barbaric Manchus are a much worse enemy. Again, this conclusion shares a similar tone with the iconoclats’
endorsement of Western colonialism.

It is noteworthy that the discourse of the Hanists in the post-Mao era is somewhat different from anti-Manchuiism in the late 19th century, when the revolutionaries use radical racial discourse to mobilize people to overthrow the Qing government. The Manchus were “incompetent; corrupt; oppressive and arbitrary; and, above all, incapable of defending China’s national interests against the rapacious foreign powers” (Rhoads, 2000, p. 11). Nevertheless, neither Zou Rong nor Chen Tianhua, the chief outspoken critics of anti-Manchuiism, assumed the original Chinese civilization had traits of modernity which were exterminated by the Manchus. Both of them admitted “the foreigners’ civilizations are much better than China’s... compared with the Mongolians, the Manchus, or the Miao and the Yao people, we Han Chinese are civilized; but compared with the Western countries, we are barbarians,” “that we Chinese enjoy being slaves is no new thing... we Chinese have no history... but a history of being slaves” (Chen & Zhou, 1994, p. 22, Tsou, 1968, pp. 114-115). The revolutionary goal “annihilates the five million and more of the furry and horned Manchu race, and cleanse ourseves of 260 years of harsh and unremitting pain” but also “sweep away millennia of despotism in all its forms, and throw off millennia of slavishness” (Tsou, 1968, p. 58). In brief, the rhetoric of authentic Chinese modernity to legitimize anti-Manchuiism is a new strategy. The new generation of Hanists is more confident than the revolutionists in the early 20th century. However, using the degree of modernization to support the claim

http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_46f13ae601011v3y.html

51 The revolutionaries’ indictment against the Manchus, concluded by Edward Rhoads, includes these points: The Manchus were an alien, non-Chinese group committed heinous crimes against the Chinese, and barbarized China by forcing the Chinese to adopt Manchu customs. The Manchus also enjoyed a privileged position and treated the Han unequally with hostility. Rhoads, E. J. M. (2000). Manchus and Han: Ethnic relations and political power in late Qing and early Republican China, 1861-1928. pp.12-17. Seattle: University of Washington Press.
unveils the fact that they are still stuck in imagination shaped by Western imperialist rhetoric.

Like the blacks in Fanon’s work who “want to prove at all costs to the whites the wealth of the black man’s intellect and equal intelligence,” the Hanists as well as self-hating iconoclasts, are struggling to distinguish themselves from the barbaric, backward “others.” They have a similar goal, but use different strategies to clean the stigma. The Hanists turn to the past, and use the strategy of scapegoating to construct a pureblood Chinese culture already integrated with modern civilization to restore self-esteem; while the iconoclasts use the promise to break with the past and join modernization to confirm the qualification of being human. Nevertheless, through the local efforts to regain self-respect by redefining their civilized self and barbaric others, the cultural hegemony of the West survives in these newly, voluntarily constructed micro structures of power.

Leibold (2010) speculated the number of Hanists and sympathizers could be in the millions. In 2013, the online forum Hanwang (bbs.hanminzu.org) has nearly 127,000 registered members. On the largest Chinese online communication platform Baidu Tieba which allows netizens to create a bar (sub-community), the Ming Dynasty Bar attracts nearly 83,000 registered members and 540,000 monthly active users. The Hanfu (Han clothing) Bar, one of the bases of the Hanfu Movement promoting “the Han race’s traditional clothing,” having nearly 218,000 registered members and 930,000 monthly active users. The Hanists perform actively online as well as offline, to expand influence.53

53 The Hanfu Movement has developed into a large business. A lot of events are organized for people wearing Hanfu for holiday celebration, worship ceremony, adult ceremony and other special rituals regarded as a part of traditional culture. In 2007, a member of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference suggested to declare Hanfu national costume. One of the National People’s Congress delegates also suggested adopting Hanfu to replace the current
Considering the influence of the anti-Manchu discourse and Han-centrism (Han benwei zhuyi) among the urban youth, and the increasing ethnic conflicts in the past years between the Han and ethnic minority groups, including the Tibetans, the Uighur, and the Manchus, the Hanists’ claims would possibly become a fraught issue posing challenge to the state and the non-state elites. However, as long as people use culture to distinguish ethnic groups and use modernity to evaluate culture, domestic ethnic tensions between the advanced “us” and the backward “others” would continue to exist as a link of the global racial hierarchy.54

White Privilege and Brown Racism

Adopting global racial hierarchy, people in China give whites privileges and place blacks in the lowest level of social hierarchy. Both aesthetic preference as well as cultural/economic/political admiration of whites exists in the post-Mao era. On the contrary, blacks are often seen as a much less civilized group creating social problems and corrupting society. As Sautman indicated, that “whites were seen as contributors to China's development, while Africans were viewed as uncultured suppliants” (Sautman, 1994, p. 424).

54 The advanced “us” could not necessarily be the Han Chinese. Ethnic minority groups could also borrow the scale of modernity to define themselves as civilized groups in a superior position to the Han Chinese. Discriminations based on geographic origin between the local residents and new immigrants in East Asia are also practiced in this way. The growing feelings of discrimination among Hong Kong residents against mainland Chinese after Hong Kong’s return to China is a typical example. A recent report on the death of a young woman in Hong Kong touches the tensions. See Austin, R. (2013). Death in Hong Kong fuels feelings of discrimination. Retrieved 10/30, 2013, from http://sinosphere.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/10/15/death-in-hong-kong-fuels-feelings-of-discrimination. It is noteworthy that Western media outlets usually are reluctant to report on racial discrimination against the mainland Chinese, because the dispute between the Hong Kong and mainland China is generally framed to be a fight between democracy and dictatorship.
Whites are regarded as a more beautiful race for their lighter color. For Chinese people, admiration of white skin is a tradition that can be traced back to the very beginning of Chinese civilization. The highest praise of skin color is usually expressed by comparing the skin to the white jade, which is a symbol of pure morality and everlasting beauty. However, white in tradition did not have a racial meaning, but is a division of class. Laborers are called “black-headed people” (qianshou) for they have to work in the sun all day long. Hence, white skin implies a decent and comfortable lifestyle. It distinguishes the landlord class from the peasantry, and is the symbol of the elites (Dikotter, 1992, p. 11). China’s tradition of the imperial examination system and respect of education ensured that well-educated people could improve their social class to be the member of political elites. This group, without doubt, stays away from hard labor. Hence, white skin not only meant wealth and power, but also meant a high-level of education; while dark skin meant hard labor, lower social class, poverty, illiteracy, and was the evidence of being the ruled. Mencius, the ancient Chinese philosopher indicated: “mental workers administer others while physical workers are administered by others.” Being a mental worker (and being white) means being the one who can administer the black physical workers.

The admiration of white skin in ancient China did not mean equal acceptance of white European supremacy. Indeed, East Asians never defined themselves as “yellow” before the late 19th century. Europeans once were regarded as white ghosts, and their complexion was “ash-white” rather than white (Dikotter, 1992, p. 14). However, the similar admiration of skin color sets the foundation for a further change of aesthetic
standard. Conquered by the West, the Chinese gradually accepted Western racial categories. The complexion of Europeans finally became the new standard for white.\textsuperscript{55} Today, skin-lightening products have been a large business in East Asia. The fashion industry in China also does not veil its preference of white models. Cherishing white does not necessarily have racial meanings. However, even from the aesthetic dimension the whites are placed in a superior position to the blacks.

Being regarded as a superior racial group, it is much easier for the whites to find a decent job in China. This preference is especially reflected in China’s ESL industry. Skin color is crucial. This is the convention adopted by the recruiters from both public schools and private education providers. For them, a prototype of a foreign English teacher is a white European or American with blue eyes and blond hair. “In China, English teaching is a whites-only club,” an NBC reporter wrote. Recruiters would prefer a white candidate with lower education background and poor teaching experience, because physical appearance is much more important. The report quoted an online post to explain the pecking order in a Chinese company’s recruitment: “1. White Americans and white Canadians; 2. white British; 3. white Australians, white New Zealanders and white South Africans; 4. European non-natives, black Americans and black British; 5. American Asians; black Australians, black New Zealanders, Filipinos and Africans.”\textsuperscript{56} Obviously, the requirement of race and nationality is set up by the market. Parents prefer white-

\textsuperscript{55} For the West, describing East Asians as “yellow” is also a modern imagination. Michael Keevak’s book \textit{Becoming Yellow: A Short History of Racial Thinking} examines the historical process of how East Asians become “yellow.” Chinese and Japanese people were described as white in early travel and missionary reports before the 18\textsuperscript{th} century. It is noteworthy that the color yellow does not have negative meanings in Chinese culture but is often used as a symbol of royalty. Anyway, admiration of white skin is also a strong tradition.

looking teachers to teach their children, not Asian or black, because they do not believe a non-white could speak native English. Furthermore, white skin is also a positive image.

The founder of Quakers Education, an overseas education-consulting corporation, shared his experience in a comment to the NBC report:

In one case, a school needed a teacher to teach oral English. However, they chose a white-looking student from Russia whose native language was not English and did not have teaching experience at all, but refused a native-born American Asian who had four-year ESL teaching experience. In another case, all the children in class were scared and began to cry when a black teacher walked into the classroom. Their parents instantly asked the school to replace him with a white teacher. What can I say?57

The more deeply China engages in globalization, the more foreigners stream into this country. When people in China have more alternatives, they prefer the whites to replace the black employees. Marketus Presswood, a black language instructor working in China since the late 1990s, has noticed such shift in job market. In 1999, students were satisfied to have a black English teacher. However, he found it became difficult to continue teaching in 2003. Students complained to schools, saying that they want a “different” teacher, which means a white instructor with physical attractiveness.58 As a result, schools have to look for more white teachers to meet the requirements and promise them a higher salary. A staff from an English teaching institution in Fuzhou, the capital city of Fujian Province, complained about the difficulty of finding a white teacher:

“White teachers all have a full schedule. Black teachers are unwelcome at all. What can I do?”59 In Fuzhou, a white teacher could earn 300 to 400 yuan (equals 49 to 65 dollars)

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per hour, while the hourly wage for a black teacher is only 150 yuan. The staff lamented for the huge difference caused by race:

The black female teacher is so happy to get the job and asks me to give her more chances in the future. Skin color talks in our business. I was at the point of tears when pleading the white teachers to accept the offer. We have to flatter them and give them a much higher salary. And all of these are just decided by the accident of birth.60

The white privilege also breeds more “face jobs.” Chinese companies are willing to employ white persons to represent the company or pretend to be a business partner to attend meetings and events.61 A report “Rent a White Guy” from The Atlantic recorded such experiences. The author was hired to pretend to be a quality-control expert to increase the credibility of the company, although he did not have any professional knowledge in quality-control. He was required to wear nice suits and make appearances at ceremonies to deliver a speech in English. As the Chinese-language tutor of the author indicated, “Having foreigners (the white) in nice suits gives the company face.”62 In the eye of the Chinese, a good looking white man in a power suit is the symbol of the most professional and authoritative figure. The role cannot be taken by any other races; neither the yellow, nor the black.

The reform and open-up policy provides increasing opportunities to contact with foreigners for Chinese people, and re-introduces the West (the whites) as the model for

http://www.weibo.com/1952700522/yoK4KwR1w
China’s development. On the side of the blacks, they were no longer seen as comrades to fight against Western imperialism, but as a negative example of failure and poverty.

Large-scale conflicts and demonstrations against African students that occurred in universities in the 1980s reflected the darkest face of racism in China (Lufrano, 1994). African students’ habits and preferential treatment provided by the Chinese state had become the fuses of these conflicts. At that time, Chinese students were infuriated by African students’ behavior, including playing loud music at night, drinking, and more importantly, their dating with Chinese girls. The high stipend and better housing condition enjoyed by the African students also strengthened Chinese students’ dissatisfaction. From these students’ perspectives, what they saw on campus was the less hard-working, noisy, drunk blacks using their undeserved money to flirt with Chinese girls. Moreover, the rumor that the African students were AIDS carriers further exacerbated hostility (Sautman, 1994). Conflicts continuously took place in different universities and cities, and finally reached a climax in 1988. The “Nanjing incident,” triggered by an altercation between a university gatekeeper and two African students who wanted to bring Chinese girls back to their dormitory and later developed into a racial turmoil with thousands of students getting involved in. Angry Chinese male students attacked these “black devils” by stone and bottle throwing, and urged them to “go the hell home” and to not “pollute Chinese society with their relations with Chinese women” (Sautman, 1994; Cheng, 2011).

63 In the incident of campus conflicts occurred in Hehai University in 1986, the university president stated that the stipend received by African students was more than his salary after 30 years of teaching (Sautman, 1994). One can see the economic disparity was even more striking for the students. The differences in living standard caused Chinese students’ angry, which is similar to the feeling of reverse discrimination among the White in the U.S.

64 The Chinese word is “heigui.” “Black devil” is a translation provided by Sautman. Another translation, which is
students from the campus for their safety (Cheng, 2011).

African students argued that the Chinese did not only disrespect but discriminated against them as an inferior race. The fact was that all foreign students from different countries were dating Chinese girls, but hostility was only raised against the Africans. There was no criticism against the white students whose living condition was, and is, better than their black classmates. The existence of racial hierarchy was proved by Sautman’s survey on Chinese people’s image of foreigners. Well-educated citizens were asked to rank seven groups of foreigners, including Western Europeans, Africans, Japanese, Americans, South-east Asians, Arabs and Indians by the level of culture, intelligence, morality, education, capability, economy, attractiveness, etc. The survey result showed that Africans were ranked worst of nine in all the ten attributes as backward, unintelligent, uncivilized, lazy, troublemaking, low social position, low capability, undeveloped, unattractive but relatively honest. On the contrary, Western Europeans and Americans were placed in the highest rank (Sautman, 1994, pp. 429-434).

The prejudice against the blacks persists in the next two decades, although domestic radical anti-black violence no longer occurred. China’s economy rocketed after the 1980s. Rapid economic growth and the prevalence of modern (or western) lifestyles gradually eliminated cultural and economic factors that once had been the cause of the conflicts between Chinese and African students. However, China’s global expansion and economic success proves the validity of existing racial hierarchy again: White is the model for Yellow, and Yellow is better than Black.

usually used in literature, is “nigger.”
According to Cheng Yinghong’s elaborate review of cyber racism against Africans (2011), incidents which could stir up people’s wrath are quite similar. They are afraid the growing black population is a group of trouble-makers who commit crimes, and express their disgust at inter-marriage between Chinese women and African men. Furthermore, they would be extremely angry when they feel they are discriminated against by the blacks. With the perception that blacks are an inferior race in a lower position of hierarchy, being discriminated becomes more intolerable for the Chinese. That is why Liu Zhirong, an active businessman and writer who had stayed in Africa for ten years, bemoaned in a column article about his experiences in Africa: “How shameful it is when a nation with five thousand years of civilization cannot even win the respect of the blacks who used to be bought and sold as slaves!” He described how the police in Africa always stopped cars with Chinese passengers to extort money as tolls, while “the face of the white is a pass.” The feeling of humiliation drew the author to use the law of the jungle to explain “why the Chinese are discriminated against in Africa.” “Because China never colonized Africa [as Britain and France had done].” He wrote, “…all of the nations in the world respect power and discriminate against the weak…a person needs to be stronger than others to win their respect, a nation must defeat other nations to gain their respect.”

Discrimination against other racial group interlaced with inner anxiety again. Liu not only felt China’s weakness in power, but also felt China’s lack of modernity. That is

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65 Cheng Yinghong’s case study provides more information of Liu Zhirong’s personal background and has a detailed discussion of the two articles titled as “Why are the Chinese discriminated against in Africa?” and “The Chinese in the eyes of African people.” Check the articles at http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_46904e310100d276.html and http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_46904e310100d3y4.html

why he also wrote the essay “the Chinese in the eyes of African people,” a self-reflection listing ten reasons to analyze why Africans despise Chinese. These reasons include meaningless diligence, cheap but bad quality products, a lack of sense of respect to the role of law, a lack of civility and cooperation, a lack of religious belief, etc. In other words, in many aspects the Africans have a more civilized manner than the Chinese. Liu’s attitude is an example of how prejudice against blacks could intertwine with a pro-modernization discourse which implies a self-hatred tendency, because the measuring scale of an ethnic group is the same one – modernity.

Ironically, the pre-modernization discourse often includes a call for democracy – the modernization on political institutions, and a call for cultural reform – as people believe political institutions grow out from the soil of culture. Campus anti-African demonstrations in the 1980s paralleled pro-democracy movements. Students participated in both movements, and used slogans of freedom and human rights in anti-African demonstrations (Cheng, 2011; Lufrano, 1994; Sautman, 1994). M. Dujon Johnson recorded dialogues with two famous Chinese dissidents. When he asked why they did not work with African-American human rights activists, both of them, known in the West as leaders of democracy movements in China, stated “[they were] not at all concerned with Blacks in America because all Chinese know that African and African-American people had bad social habits and vices and they would corrupt Chinese society as they had corrupted American society.” Johnson observed that:

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the student democratic movement leaders in Mainland China, in looking at the United States as a standard for equality and democracy to emulate, looked at American society through Caucasian eyes and ignored the institutionalized racism in the United States toward African-Americans and other people of color…including their own Chinese ancestors. (Johnson, 2007, pp. 104-106)

The internet era witnesses a seamless flow of racial discourse across boundaries. People in different countries can join the chorus of racism and share their ideas and experiences, reinforcing the existing white supremacy and black inferiority in everyday life. In the end of this section, I will use a news report on the business of egg donation in the U.S. to prove how the idea of racial hierarchy penetrates in daily life through the digital flow of information. The report was from a Malaysia Chinese newspaper:

“Women selling eggs to make money is not rare in the U.S., yet the most interesting point is, the most expensive eggs are from ethnic Chinese, gaining a price even higher than the eggs from blond women.”68 The next day, it was forwarded by the mainland Chinese online media syndicate sina.com and further shared on Weibo. The news came into my view when I checked Weibo. It was forwarded by Dealmoon, an account posting daily deals and coupons for the Chinese in North America with more than 200,000 followers. When Dealmoon forwarded the news, it added a question: “so eggs from which ethnic group are worth the least?” “Definitely are the black,” Someone left a comment. Another person replied: “Think about which ethnic groups are ill-educated and often rob others, or find out which ethnic groups live in the districts in the main cities with the lowest

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property rates, you will get the answer.” Among more than 180 forwarded messages and comments of this post, only two comments concerned racial discrimination.\textsuperscript{69}

\textsuperscript{69} Read the comments at http://www.weibo.com/2132734472/yirQxF8lk#133668488859.
CHAPTER 3: DOMESTIC RESOURCES FOR RACIAL DISCOURSE IN THE POST-MAO ERA

In today’s Western media reports, China is framed usually as an arrogant rising power (an aggressive dragon, as the Economist often portrayed). It is dominated by a corrupt, totalitarian communist state, which leads a group of xenophobic and self-centric nationalists and oppresses liberal dissidents with political and economic force in growth. Nevertheless, using the prism of critical racial theory to observe the various popular discourses, there emerges a more complex spectrum of discourses and ideologies.

After a review on the party-state’s solution of racial issues, this chapter will further examine the domestic resources for racial discourse’s internalization in China’s modernization in the post-Mao era. Except for the unchanged Western hegemony preserved by neocolonialism, certain elements of traditional Chinese culture and the party-state’s policy shift, as well as contribute to the internalization of racial discourse.

Class Analysis and Historical Relativism: the Party-State’s Solution

As a modern political party with Marxism as its doctrine, the CCP seeks revolution and industrialization. The communists, like the liberals, also adopt a linear progressive historical view to interpret history and criticize traditional culture.

A common perspective emphasizes the iconoclast attitude and performance of the CCP. Founded in 1921 by and self-defined as the inheritor of the May Fourth Movement in 1919, the CCP was deeply influenced by the atmosphere of cultural iconoclasm. Two of the party founders, Chen Duxiu and Li Dazhao, as well as Lu Xun (who was later
praised by Mao Zedong as “the supreme commander in China’s cultural revolution” (Mao, 1955, p.144), were the leaders of the New Culture Movement, the first enlightenment movement in 1915. Both liberalism and socialism in China could be traced back to this movement, which called for democracy and science, as well as a full and complete knockdown of the old ethic code and old culture. Marx himself sometimes used the racist stereotype of “their [the Chinese] hereditary stupidity” and was criticized by Said for his orientalist attitude (Duara, 1995, p. 24; Said, 1978, p. 154). Tension between the “advanced” communist ideology and the “backward” traditional culture was sustained throughout the whole century and reached its peak in the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution launched by Mao Zedong. The radical rejection of the “high culture” belonging to the past produced the greatest destruction of tradition.

Nevertheless, criticism of culture was prevented from sliding into self-loathing racial prejudice and widespread worshiping of white people by Marxism’s class analysis and historical relativism. At the theoretical level, the racial issue was deconstructed. By using the concept of class to deconstruct the concept of race, people in the same racial group are divided into two non-biologic categories: the ruling class and the ruled class. The proletarian party is firmly on the side of the ruled class and based the revolution mainly upon the worker-peasant alliance. Communists admit China needs a new culture. However, the new culture is the culture consisted of the “people” who had once been ruled in both feudal and capitalist society, not the Western capitalist culture sought by the liberalists. Because modern China had been a semi-feudal semi-colonial society, the

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70 To learn the iconoclastic attitude of Chen Duxiu, read the fourth chapter of *The Crisis of Chinese Consciousness* written by Lin Yusheng.
ruling class in China included both Chinese landlords and foreign imperialists. The new culture’s opponent is both of imperialist culture and feudal culture. Mao defined the conflict between the cultures as:

All the new political, new economic and new cultural forces are revolutionary forces in China which are opposed to the old politics, old economy and old culture. The old things are composed of two parts: one is China’s own semi-feudal politics, economy and culture and the other is imperialist politics, economy and culture, with the latter heading the alliance. All these are rotten and should be completely destroyed. The struggle between the new and the old in Chinese society is a struggle between the new forces of the broad masses of the people (the various revolutionary classes) and the old forces of imperialism and the feudal class. Such a struggle between the new and the old is a struggle between revolution and counter-revolution. (Mao, 1955, p. 142)

Class analysis also divides traditional culture into essence (jinghua) and dross (zaopo). Culture created by the ruled masses could be regarded as a splendid historical heritage. The party indicated that “the peasants and the handicraftsmen alone formed the principal classes that created wealth and culture,” and used peasant uprisings to prove China had a tradition of revolution (Ibid, pp. 73-74). Culture created by individuals in the ruling class who spoke for the masses and showed resistance to the authority also belongs to the first category. For example, Mao gave high praise to the classic novel Hong Lou Meng (Dream of the Red Chamber), a masterpiece written by Cao Xueqin in the mid-18th century about the vicissitude of an aristocratic family. Mao appreciated the novel for its realistic narration of the daily life of the ruling class, which reflecting class conflicts in the family between masters and servants, as well as the inside chaos of the ruling class.

With this strategy, people in the modern era could wash away the stigma of being a barbaric nation. The backwardness of China in the modern era is not the fault of the nation in biological or cultural meanings, but because of the landlords’ ruthless
exploitation and oppression of the peasants (Ibid, p. 75). Levenson indicated: “a Chinese might cut himself away from the doomed tradition by calling it class, not national. He might identify the nation as ‘people’s China’, quite uncommitted to the feudal culture of landlords, hence emotionally uninvolved in its debacle” (Levenson, 1968, p.54).

This strategy could also be used to deconstruct the problem of the ethnic minorities and other people of color. On the issue of the Manchus and Qing, class analysis distinguishes the landlords as ruling class – the imperial family and Manchu elites – from the ordinary Manchu people. The latter was regarded as a part of the ruled masses and needed to be protected and helped as an ethnic minority. It is the Manchu elites, not the ordinary Manchu people, who should be blamed for their exploitation and oppression on the masses rather than for their special barbaric ethnic traits. On the issue of people of color, all people of color who belong to the ruled class under the coercion from the white imperialists should unite together and fight against the ruling class around the world.

Because of the theory of stages, culture of the ruling class which should be wiped out in modern era also has its historical meanings. According to the theory, a society would experience five successive stages of development determined by material conditions. A later stage is more advanced than an early stage. Ancient China remained in the stage of feudal society for three thousand years from the Zhou Dynasty to the Qing Dynasty. Compared to the fourth stage capitalist society, China was a backward country because it stayed in the third stage. Nevertheless, compared to a slave society, feudal China would be an advanced society. For the communist party seeking a modern
revolution to change the relations of production, the old superstructure of feudal society is an obstacle that should be wiped away. For a society reigned by aristocracy, feudal theorists should be regarded as revolutionaries who bring progress. The value of culture is not absolute, but is decided by time/era.

Levenson had made an elaborate explanation of Marxist historical relativism in *Confucian China and Its Modern Fate*. Levenson states, “by virtue of the theory of stages, Ssu-ma Kuang and others of his traditional stature could be relativised, as it were, into their own times, and redeemed from absolute censure,”\(^71\) and “it was nothing absolute, but relative to process. In what he was, he had to be imperfect: he could not escape the limitations of time and place. His merit lay in where he was going” (Levenson, 1965, p.58 & 69). Marxism provides a third way for Confucius. When the communists believe they have entered in the new stage of society, they treat Confucius as a historical figure who belongs to a past era. Confucius is no longer worshiped as a living sage, as the traditionalists did. Nor is he treated as a target of the radical liberal iconoclasts who use race rather than age to determine the state of society. Instead, he is “retired honorably into the silence of the museum” (*Ibid*, p.79).

Theoretically, communists could be iconoclasts but not racists. Because they “kill the past for their own day, yet relativistically fitting it into history, and a history China owed, not a history flowing into the West’s” (*Ibid*, p.106). With the theoretical framework of historical relativism, Marxists are more effective in easing the anxiety of being backward than the May Fourth liberals. Nevertheless, the party-state’s serious

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\(^{71}\) Ssu-ma Kuang, or Sima Guang, is a conservative Confucian scholar and minister in the Song dynasty. He is one of the greatest historians of ancient China.
abuse of class conflict discourse in reality, especially reflected by the chaos of Cultural Revolution and the failure in economic development before 1978, led to the bankruptcy of Marxism and communism in China.

Marxism in the post-Mao era encountered public hostility similar to what Confucianism had encountered in the early 20th century. Intertwined with real politics, political philosophy was attacked and abandoned as a part of dictatorship. Furthermore, the state adjusted its agenda to stop the debate of class conflict and focus on economic modernization. It encourages individual enrichment, and loosens constraints on cultural life. Intellectuals, who had been cruelly oppressed by the state’s advocating of “masses new culture” because of their “feudal” or “capitalist” tone, soon actively reoccupied the area of culture with great advantage in education. As a strong rebound against the state, citizens in the post-Mao era eagerly embrace Western-style high culture and popular culture, while treating Marxism as an outdated nightmare. Cultural analysis of history is again picked up by liberalists who continues claiming themselves as the inheritor of liberal spirit of the May Fourth Movement to challenge the orthodox class theory, while the nation also witness a resurgence of old Chinese traditional culture.

Cultural Hierarchy: Ancient China’s Imagination of World Order

In the study of anti-African demonstrations, Sautman (1994) also notices a confluence of racism and elitism in the reforming era. Well-educated urban citizens’ perception of Chinese peasants is similar to their perception of Africans. In the survey, peasants were rated as a culturally backward, less industrious, not well-behaved, poor,
low political capacity group. Peasants shared same characteristics with Africans, although they got a score higher than the latter. The social group of intellectuals got the highest score in this survey.

The result reflects the strong tradition of social and cultural hierarchical order in China. The group of intellectuals (shì) was placed as the head of four occupations (simin zhi shou) and enjoyed privilege, because bureaucratic system promised government officials must be selected among well-educated intellectuals. Chinese intellectuals were expected to govern the country with their superior knowledge and morality.\(^72\)

As Fairbank concluded, Chinese social order “was hierarchic and anti-egalitarian. Its people were organized in status levels according to sex, kinship, and social function…The literate few were superior to the illiterate mass, however, caste was avoided” (Fairbank eds., 1968, p. 5). The principle was further used to construct world order, known as Sinocentrism (Ibid, p. 2).

In the ancient Chinese imagination, the world was constructed with a civilized core, and alien groups did not follow the Chinese ways of life were placed in barbaric periphery. From the early stage of Chinese civilization, theorists of Confucian school developed the idea of using culture rather than descent to distinguish hua (Chinese) and yi (barbarians). The distinction between hua and yi was strict and hierarchical: the latter was compared to birds and animals (qinshou). Nonetheless, the theorists held an opinion that the transformation between hua and yi is feasible. Barbarians could be culturally assimilated to be civilized Chinese. This spontaneous cultural assimilation was welcomed

\(^{72}\) Respecting the ruled masses as the real drive force of progress, Mao’s theory of “new culture” once broke the positive correlation between virtue/knowledge and social status. Intellectuals are not the savior to guide the nation. On the contrary, they should learn from the masses actively create wealth and culture. However, when Sautman conducted the survey in 1992, the traditional hierarchy was already revived.
because it would prove the sovereign of the core – the Middle Kingdom – is sage and virtuous. When all the barbarians are transformed, the world would achieve great peace.\footnote{It should be indicated that the urge to civilize others was a quite weak one. As Wang Gungwu indicated, “there were no equivalents of the holy crusades, nor were there manifestations of missionary zeal. The urge was expressed mainly in teaching the Chinese language…” (Wang, 1991, p. 148).}

This Sinocentric world order was based upon strong cultural superiority. The feeling of superiority “developed over a long and continuous period as the product of history…at times it was clearly myth, a sustaining and comforting myth, but equally clearly at other times it was reality, a reality that nurtured cultural pride but also called for moral restraint” (Fairbank eds., 1968, p. 36). The long history of the wars between this agrarian-based civilization originated from North China, or the Central Plains \textit{(Zhongyuan)}, and the barbarians especially the nomad tribes from Inner Asia roughly supported the myth: the latter were either driven out from the Central Plains or culturally assimilated to be new Chinese. With strong military power, the nomad tribes could establish dynasties to rule China. Nevertheless, it was impossible to long govern the terrain without adopting pre-existing economic, political and cultural institutions of this civilization, which might be quite weak militaristically, but had never been transcended in wealth and culture.

The idealized world order in the imagination of the Confucian scholars requires the group in a higher level of hierarchy to bear corresponding moral responsibility and perform in a more civilized way. Confucius stated: “If distant people are not obedient, Chinese rulers should win them over by cultivating their own ‘refinement and virtue’ \textit{(wende)}” (as cited in Fairbank eds., 1968, p. 181). This theory was always challenged by
real politics. However, the imagination was kept alive as a goal to encourage the ruler to perform leniency toward subjects.

Hence, cultural identity has been extremely essential for China’s self-identity. Joseph Levenson concluded: “The civilization, not the nation, has a moral claim on man’s allegiance” (Levenson, 1958, p. 102). Because of China’s cultural impact in East Asia, other societies in the Chinese cultural sphere, including Korea, Vietnam, Japan and the kingdom of Liuqiu (Ryukyu) also influenced and accepted the Chinese imagination of world order. A dramatic scene in the history of Sino-Japanese and Sino-Korean relations is the collapse of cultural identity to the Chinese cultural sphere because of the Manchu’s rule of China. Koreans were never fully devoted to the Qing dynasty, although they stayed in the tribute system (Ibid, p. 111). They believed that the Manchus who destroyed the orthodox Chinese civilization did not have the qualification to be the emperor of the world. “There is no China after the Ming dynasty,” a Korean wrote in a letter in the 18th century. Here, China was a cultural concept rather than a geographic or racial one. From his perspective, the Chinese should be blamed for their obedience to the barbaric Qing regime. Japanese also expressed a similar dismissive attitude toward Qing regime. They both indicated that China under the reign of Qing was no longer the China they acknowledged as the civilized core of the world. Instead, Korea or Japan was the true inheritor of authentic Chinese culture and should be the new center of the Confucian universe (Ge, 2011, pp. 151-168).

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74 This is included in the discussion of the concepts “tianxia” (a civilization entity) and “guo” (country, nation, or dynasty). Read Levenson’s discussion on this topic in Levenson, J. (1958) Confucian China and Its Modern Fate: The Problem of Intellectual Continuity. pp.95-108.

75 These arguments were used by the Hanists to support their anti-Manchu discourse.
On the side of the Qing emperors, they also felt the pressure to prove that they were not barbarians, but new lords of the Middle Kingdom with cultural and moral legitimacy. In the case of Zeng Jing, Emperor Yongzheng sought to redefine the concept of yi by arguing it only signified in geography. Zeng tried to persuade General Yue Zhongqi to overthrow the Qing regime: “The barbarians are a different species from us, like animals; it is the Chinese who should stay in this land and the barbarians who should be driven out” (Spence, 2001, p. 7). He believed a scholar of Confucianism rather than a barbarian should be the emperor (Ibid, p. 89). Zeng was arrested, and the emperor felt he, slandered by Zeng, should give a theoretical counterattack rather than just simply sentence the conspirator to death.

In the book *Awakening to Supreme Justice* (*Dayi juemi lu*) edited by Yongzheng to criticize Zeng Jing’s argument, the emperor indicated there was no relevance between race and morality:

> The Seditious rebels make the suggestion that we were the sovereign of Manchuria and later entered the Central States to become its ruler. Their prejudices about the territorial division between this land and that land have led to hateful lies and fabrications. What they have failed to understand is that Manchuria is to the Manchus what the birthplace is to the people of the Central States. King Shun was a man of the eastern yi and King Wen was a man of the western yi. Did that diminish their sagely virtue? (Liu, 2004, p. 84)

He further argued that the ruler-minister relationship, one of the five relationships which were the central idea of Confucianism, was more important than the distinction

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76 Check *Treason by the Book* written by Jonathan Spence for the details of the Zeng Jing case.
78 The translation is quoted from *The Clash of Empires: The Invention of China in Modern World Making* written by Lydia H. Liu. In this book, Liu made the argument that after Yongzheng’s effort to redefine the word yi, the word was later used in Qing dynasty to refer to “geographic foreign.” Only after the arrival of the British, yi was redefined by the imperialists as barbarians.
between *hua* and *yi.* The Qing regime followed the principles of Confucianism and inherited the tradition which could be traced back to ancient sage kings of China:

The distinction between the *zhong* (center, central), and the *wai* (outer) is a line drawn on the ground but the distinction between the *shang* (high) and the *xia* (low) is made in Heaven…The tradition that has been inherited (by our dynasty) is that of *zhongwai yijia* (the Center and the Outer being one family) which goes back to the times of King Yao and King Shun. (Liu, 2004, p. 85)

The Manchu emperor admitted his ancestors were originated from periphery or “the Outer.” However, the Center and the Outer both follow the same principle of Heaven. There is only one center of civilization and only one way to achieve the center – to be morally transformed (*hua, xianghua*) by Chinese culture. As Ge Zhaoguang indicated, this psychology could be turned into a resource contributing to the expansion of the Western knowledge system of modernization (Ge, 2006, pp. 185-187). This time, China was placed on the barbaric periphery, while the wealthy, powerful and civilized West took the role of core in the new world order (Luo, 2009, p. 46).

**New Strategy of Modernization in the Post-Mao Era**

Although the communist party once had eased the anxiety of being backward, it failed in realizing the ultimate goal of the nation – to make the country rich and powerful. Political chaos led to economic stagnation. People were living in poverty and grievance. After Mao’s death in 1976, the state decided the nation need an urgent reform.

The reform was basically carried out under the guide of developmentalism and liberalization. Modernization with economic growth as core principle became the 79

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79 The five relationships, or *wulun*, are ruler-minister, father-son, husband-wife, brother-brother, friend-friend.

80 The translation is also quoted from *The Clash of Empires: The Invention of China in Modern World Making.*
national goal. A shift from planned economy to market economy greatly encouraged both domestic and international trade. Special economic zones were established to attract foreign capital investment. Private enterprises were mushrooming while state-owned enterprises were reorganized and transformed. The government also actively constructed relations with global organizations. It asks for fund and technology from the World Bank, and further achieved accession to the WTO in 2001.

Encouragement of consumption also became an important strategy to promote economic growth. As anthropologist Yunxiang Yan indicated, “The party-state-sponsored process of making a socialist new person evolved into a new process of making a new post-socialist consumer led by both the party-state and global capitalism” (Yan, 2009, xxix). This policy shift was reflected in the slogan “[Be] able to make money and knowing how to spend it” (nengzheng huihua) in the reform era, while in Mao’s era, the ideology was “hard work and plain living” (Ibid, p. 211).

The party-state decided to suspend the disputes of “socialism vs. capitalism,” instead of adopting the well-known tactic invented by Deng Xiaoping: no matter whether it is a white or a black cat, as long as it catches mice, it is a good cat. This indeed means discharging class analysis. As a result, national economy rocketed and open worship of wealth soon became the new ideology in the post-Mao society. Poverty now was a sign of shameful personal failure, rather than the result of being exploited by the ruling class. “Consumption and possession gradually replaced political symbols as the path toward defining one’s social status and drawing group boundaries. The endless pursuit of material goods also helped to reduce the role of ideology in social life,” Yan writes (Ibid,
Xin Liu’s anthropological study on urban business practice in the reform era further indicates the changes that occurred in Chinese social relations, that:

> the hierarchical space of social relations before and during the Maoist revolution was filled by qualitative differences…However, the space of the social relations in today’s China is constituted by the differences of quantity – how much one earns and how much one has in terms of material goods and commodities. (Liu, 2002, p. 62)

This argument echoes Yan’s observation of a north China village: “Even the party has realized that money now speaks louder than political slogans, and has adopted a market mechanism as a means of maintaining its political control over local cadres” (Yan, 2009, p. 37).

In Yan and Liu’s studies, two types of people, who should be most loyal to state ideology, all turn to seek individual wealth. In Yan’s book, it is a village party secretary who frankly talks about his motivation to do the job: “Simple – for money. I was not interested in the title of party secretary, but I do like the salary…I am working for my children, not for the party” (Ibid, p. 36). Liu’s book reflects on a young scholar who wanted to publish his doctoral dissertation on the topic of Marxism and demography, but was refused by editors who believed no one would want to read this outdated topic. Later, the disappointed scholar followed a classmate’s suggestion, giving up a tenure job for business because “what we need is cash” (Liu, 2002, p. 133). He became a successful businessman. His doctoral degree in economics also helped him in business negotiations, because the arrogant officials would thus show some respect: “they knew they could not babble nonsense as if no one understood what was going on. They could have done that
to someone who was not well educated, they could not do that to me because I have my degree” *(Ibid, p. 40)*. Now, knowledge would help one to acquire wealth and win respect.

The era of “be more knowledgeable, be more reactionary” *(zhishi yue duo yue fandong)* was ended. In Mao’s era, poverty and being an uneducated member of the ruled class signifies moral purity. The rich and well-educated that belong to the old ruling class need to be transformed in physical labor and self-reflection, so they could be purified to be a member of the people – the once oppressed masses. Nonetheless, when the state started to mobilize people to seek wealth and forget the model of class conflict, the traditional hierarchy quickly got its reemergence. The correlation between wealth, knowledge and social status was resumed. Admiration of the wealthy West is thus logical. The economic gap between the rich West and the poor third world countries is so wide that it is the most persuasive evidence of a well-organized society. The reality that China was so economically underdeveloped became a stimulus arouses deep anxiety and feelings of shamefulness among people. The script of *River Elegy (Heshang)*, a most controversial television documentary series in 1988 had a huge impact in China, reflecting the anxiety of being backward in economy:

Let us open our eyes and see our people’s situation on this planet! The World Bank’s annual reports reveal the following figures: Out of one hundred twenty-eight nations in the world, China’s average per capita GNP ranks about twentieth from the bottom, in company with poor African countries such as Somalia and Tanzania. China’s rate of increase in per capita GNP, the structure of her export commodities, her investment in education and public health all fail to match those of Asia’s ‘four little dragons.’ In 1960, China’s GNP was equivalent to Japan’s; by 1985, it was only one-fifth of Japan’s; in 1960, U.S. GNP exceeded China by 460 billion U.S. dollars, but by 1985 it exceeded China by 3 trillion 680 billion dollars. Though we always thought we were making great strides toward progress, how little we knew that others were making far faster strides than us! If this gap should continue at present rates, some people have made a frightening comparison:
that in another fifty or sixty years, China will once again be in the situation of the
Opium War: that foreigners will possess foreign guns and cannon, leaving
Chinese with only long knives and spears. No wonder then that someone has
made an even louder appeal: that if things go wrong, China’s global citizenship
will be revoked! (Bodman & Wan trans., 1991, p. 171)

The theme of this TV series is that Chinese culture is the source of China’s failure
in modernization. It defines Chinese culture as a land-based “yellow” civilization, which
cannot survive in the modern era because of its inward-looking and conservative attitude.
On the contrary, the Western culture is described as a sea-faring “blue” civilization with
pioneering and expansive traits. The author uses the Yellow River as the symbol of China,
and the blue ocean as the symbol of the West. It claims that the Yellow River will
ultimately flow into the blue sea, and further indicating blue is the color of the universe
and the earth, without any condemnation of colonial activity.

The author of this script Su Xiaokang bears strong racial consciousness, believing
“the yellow soil, yellow water and yellow skin race” is not just a coincidence but a racial
culture determined by geography. China should change its culture to achieve
modernization (Cui eds., 1988, p. 90). The notion that poverty is a result of inherited
racial and cultural features rather than the product of historical circumstances is
awkwardly echoed by the discussion of the triumph of “Confucian capitalism” and “Asia
values,” in which the state was also involved (Dirlik, 1997, p. 308). Confirmation on
Asian/Chinese value gains legitimacy because of East Asia and China’s economic
achievement. These newly-developed theories intend to challenge the West’s dominance
of concept definition, yet it becomes an imitation of Western hegemony. As Hayot stated:

the “Asian values” whose legitimacy is asserted in the human rights field gain
almost all of their rhetorical force from the economic success of the East Asian
countries in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The structure of the contemporary debate thus reproduces the one that allowed Europe to export its culture through cultural and military imperialism over the last few centuries. (Hayot, 2009, p. 21)

In the 1990s, the party-state started to promote a patriotic education campaign to reinforce national identity as a counterattack to the popular notion of the River Elegy. According to the “Outline on Implementing Patriotic Education” issued by the party-state in 1994, the goals of this campaign were:

To boost the nation’s spirit, enhance cohesion, foster national self esteem and pride, consolidate and develop a patriotic united front to the broadest extent possible and direct and rally the masses’ patriotic passions to the great cause of building socialism with Chinese characteristics. (Wang, 2008, p. 790)

The expected ideal result of the campaign is a mixture of nationalism, patriotism and socialism. The emphasis on “foster national self esteem and pride” should be regarded as a reaction to the prevalence of worship of the West in the 1980s. Students should read the colonial history of modern China to recognize the darkness of Western imperialism. However, national humiliation becomes a major theme of the education campaign. It is not a new strategy, yet after the foundation of the PRC, China once was shaped as a victor succeeded in the independence war and civil war and later became the leader of international communist movement. Nonetheless, in the post-Tiananmen era, the Western hegemony becomes a challenge to the state’s legitimacy and ideology again, while at the same time the state has to learn how to develop its economy and technology from the West. The result is a resurrection of the discourse of national humiliation. As Wang indicated, that “neither was the heroic and victor narrative helpful in cultivating the young generation’s hateful attitude toward China’s old enemies which made them less appreciative of the Communist revolution” (Ibid, p. 791).
Many observers believe the propaganda of the state has been a great success. Hence appears a series of academic and popular writings on the topic of “the rising of China’s nationalism.” But presenting the history of being invaded as a national humiliation supposes some embarrassing questions: why had the Qing Empire been defeated by the West for so many times? Who should be held accountable for the “century of national humiliation”? If it is the fault of the corrupted government, then why the government had been corrupted? Why the Western governments remained so powerful and efficient? Some detailed questions could be: Why did the Qing government refuse to trade with the British and not care about the improvement of firearms and navy technology? Was the insulting sign of “Dogs and Chinese Not Admitted” a result of racial discrimination or a result of the bad behavior among the Chinese when they resided in parks?81 The official nationalist discourse has been challenged repeatedly, especially by the liberal iconoclasts who have a good reputation and a large audience. Thus, when the People’s Daily posted a message on Weibo to memorialize the day of national humiliation when the allied forces from eight powers (baguolianjun) invaded Beijing, it got thousands of comments. Many of the comments mocked the official propaganda. Some typical comments were: “Humiliation? They deserved it.” “The burnt Summer Palace belongs to the emperor; it’s none of my business.” “Beijing was occupied because

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81 This is a very controversial debate about the regulation of a public park in the international settlement in Shanghai in the late 19th century. At that time, Chinese were not allowed to enter the park, which was reserved for the foreign settlers, although the park was built with money collected from both Chinese and foreign residents. The park also did not allow dogs inside. The sign became one of the most famous evidences of how China was humiliated by the Western colonialists. However, some articles held a different opinion by quoting archives to prove that the injunction was issued because the shameful behavior of the Chinese, including damaging flowers and spitting. The Chinese were discriminated not because of their race, but because of their uncivilized behavior. Read Bickers, R.A. and Wasserstrom, J. N. (1995). Shanghai’s “Dogs and Chinese Not Admitted” Sign: Legend, History and Contemporary Symbol. The China Quarterly, 142, pp 444-466.
of the ignorant, barbaric Boxers’ attack on the Westerners. A reasonable military strike.”

These comments are rejections of official propaganda. Ironically, the discourse of anti-dictatorship is often presented as supporting hegemony. In the post-Mao era, the communist party is competing with the West for the domestic hegemony. The latter’s existence in the context could be annotated by a joke. A professor asked his students: Who is representing the advanced productive forces, the advanced culture and the fundamental benefit of the masses? The student answered: the U.S., the U.S., and the U.S.

At the end of this chapter, I want to indicate that to draw a conclusion that Chinese people hate their country is definitely wrong. As the survey conducted by the Pew Global Attitudes Projects has shown, around 90 percent of Chinese interviewees held a very favorable or somewhat favorable opinion of China in the past seven years. However, the problem is, at the same time, the shadow of being an underachiever and outlier never disappeared in China.

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82 See the post at http://www.weibo.com/2803301701/A4EQ72rJw.
83 This is the theory of “three representations” (sangedaibiao) proposed by President Jiang Zemin in 2000 as the new guiding ideology of the party. The “three representations” means “the Party must always represent the requirements of the development of China's advanced productive forces, the orientation of the development of China's advanced culture, and the fundamental interests of the overwhelming majority of the people in China.” About the overwhelming cultural hegemony of the U.S. in East Asia, especially the popular admiration of the U.S. in Taiwan, read Chen Guangxing’s discussion (2006) in the fourth chapter of Qu di guo: Ya zhou zuo wei fang fa (Towards De-Imperialization: Asia as Method).
CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSION

Compared to the existing literature on racial discourse and practice in China, my study uses critical racial theory to explore the topic from the perspective of culture. By including self-loathing sentiment in the discussion, my study positions Chinese racism in the background of global racial hierarchy, and analyzes the inner relations and shared resources of different variations of racial prejudice. Analyzing cases of the feeling of self-hatred, anti-Manchu sentiment, and white privilege and brown racism, I indicate the basic assumption, or the theme of variations, is a belief that groups of human beings can be measured using one standard: the standard of modernization.

Self-loathing sentiment is expressed by a fundamental critique of “Chineseness” launched by the Chinese people. The main argument is the Chinese nation and Chinese culture lacks certain traits of modernity, determining China’s failure in the modern era. Racial prejudice against the Chinese is veiled by “national character critique,” a strategy of “blaming yourself” expected to provoke the masses by humiliation. However, the abuse of this strategy had molded a stereotype of the “ugly Chinese.”

Liberal dissidents use the strategy to urge Westernization of political, economic and cultural institutions and to challenge the authority of the party-state. In this paradigm of cultural critique, the masses are treated as a group of the ignorant without self-consciousness of modernity, thus they need to be enlightened by education. Self-loathing sentiment reflects the tensions between modernization and tradition, and the psychological impairment as resulting from China’s defeat by the Western imperialists in the 19th century.
Experiencing the psychological impairment breeds the strategy of scapegoating. The prevalent anti-Manchu sentiment among the urban non-elite youth blames the Manchus as the real convicts, arguing they killed the sprout of capitalism and modernization in Chinese society with their brutal reign. A liberal iconoclast could switch sides to become a Hanist because of the shared anxiety of being backward and homogenous understanding of culture and development.

Examination of racial prejudice against blacks also reflects the existence of the scale of modernization. Whites have privilege in China’s job market as a superior race. Blacks are discriminated as the uncivilized loser in the competition of modernization. Liberal dissidents in China might not treat the blacks as cooperators to seek liberation and human rights, but as an inferior, corrupted race causing social problems. An anti-African chauvinist might also bear self-loathing sentiment, feeling extreme humiliation when blacks perform a more civilized manner than the Chinese.

Generally speaking, all of the agents in my study are shaped by the global racial hierarchy and the paradigm of modernization. For semi-periphery and periphery countries pursuing modernization, whether they like it or not, the West still exists as the powerful core for imitation. Nonetheless, the imitation is both deconstruction and reconstruction of existing social and cultural institutions. It is a long-lasting and painful process with inner crisis and a loss of self-esteem. In the case of China, the imitation produces a tension between modernization and traditional culture. People who feel they lack necessary cultural resources to achieve modernization become desperate in the reality. However, it is noteworthy that the desperation is sometimes adopted and magnified intentionally to
stimulate feelings of anxiety and shamefulness, which is believed to be an effective way to construct community and provoke the desire to get rid of the inferior status. This strategy is used by nationalists, liberalists, and communists when they interpret history and design future. Nevertheless, few people notice the destructive impact produced by this strategy, which facilitates the existing Western hegemony and global racial hierarchy.

The fact that people rank themselves and others according to the Western standard of modernization is an outcome of modernization. Hence, I suggest viewing racial issues within the framework of global modernization and the Western project of imperialism. The study of domestic resources for the internalization of racial discourse further raises the dilemma for people in the periphery seeking status improvement. It seems the urging of modernization would be a reinforcement of the existing system of race by recognizing the core of the system: the powerful West.

Because the discourse of liberation is so tightly intertwined with the discourse of oppression in reality, my study suggests a more cautious use of liberalist and nationalist discourse and a deeper understanding of various combinations between racial rhetoric and other ideologies. Two related questions for further study would be how the discourse of gender intertwines with variations of racial discourse, and how racial discourse is promoted around the world by the platform of new social media.

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85 Dorothy Ko (1994; 2005) observed how the male liberalists in modern era using the discourse of modernization to re-discipline women in China by defining them as backward and calling for an enlightenment of the oppressed group. The oppression against women is also used as evidence of the corrupted national character.
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