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Genres of writing History: its literary interpretation at different moments in Chinese historiographical production

Gêneros de escrita da História: sua interpretação literária em diferentes momentos da produção historiográfica chinesa

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**Abstract**

The aim of this article is to point out different ways of writing History in the field of Chinese History studies, focusing on the changes that writing History has undergone over the long term, providing references for a better understanding that Hui (2005; 2023) has called 'trans-systemic' chinese historical rationality. In comparative terms, as an intermediate between the modern and contemporary epochs, this text promotes two sources by its teleological approaches, both are bibliographical surveys about Chinese intellectual History from the late Qing period to the beginning of the Republic of China. These two sources are the published texts of Liang Qichao's New Historiography (1902) and the printed publication Xin Qingnian (1915-1926 [New Youth]), a fundamental magazine for understanding the dissemination of intellectual trends and modernist ideas during the early 20th century.

Keywords

Chinese historiography. Philosophy of history. 20th century historiography. Modernization.



Introduction

History, as a synonym for historiography, refers to the field of study and the academics who work within it, as well as its concepts and methodologies. To be perceived as history, the same history of a people, of a tale, a story, about a heritage, or whatever, the nature of its use and practice of language must be studied. (Aróstegui, 2006, pp. 24-26). And History has the word when invoked, with no doubt that - in the name of its act - lies the interpretation of a historical synthesis and abstraction, drawing attention to a "third" point (2006, p. 30). As a metaphor, no history exists unless it is told, whether written or spoken, and the history of historiography and a history, in the singular, are only perpetuated when refined, so that the analysis of historical writing itself can only occur as a result of this interrelationship.

The philosophy of history, as a field of study, is multifaceted and investigates the very essence of how we perceive, we record and interpret the past - and therefore its form of study - history. In its foundation, it examines the theoretical notions that guide historians in their quest to understand, interpret and narrate historical events. One of the most interesting aspects of this discipline is the exploration of the various genres of Writing History, each offering a unique lens through which the past can sought and analysed, which implies the theoretical-methodological tools used to it. From the storytelling of narrative history to the rigorous analysis of analytical history as well as the broader theoretical formulations onto speculative history, as it might be called, These genres of narrative, analytical, and speculative history not only shape our comprehension of historical facts but also determine our conceptualization of human societies undergoing change. (Hui, 2011, p. 165)

By investigating these diverse approaches, the philosophy of history provides valuable insights into the methodologies and epistemological tasks faced by historians, enriching our understanding of both: history itself: and the ways in which it is written, i.e. its final product: the fruit of the historiographical operation. Upon this matter, this article will discuss some selected genres of history writing within the philosophy of history, as circumscribed to the History of Chinese Historiography, highlighting their distinctions, as well as their contributions to our understanding of the past.

Furthermore, for both cases, the methodological interpretation is close to the generalization made by Li (2013, p. 34), when he said that "The Writing of History would mean the construction of narratives under a borrowing or invention of conceptual schematizations, with the purpose of rationalizing current trends of political needs and objectives." These observations are confined to the examination of contemporary Chinese history, as Li's *Reinventing Modern China* primarily addresses the late 20th century.



Furthermore, we will utilise the work of Shi-Xu (2014), which centres on the establishment of Chinese Discourse Studies (CNDA), which is also perhaps anchored in that section of Chinese national history called “Contemporary History”, defined as the period commencing on May 4, 1919 (Ma, 1974; Chow, 1980; Forster, 2019; Doleželová, 2001), encompassing the events of the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937-45) up to the present, in accordance with the occurrences of the Reform and Opening Up (1978-82) (Wakeman Jr. in Sachsenmaier, 201, p. 155). Additionally, there are elucidations that extend into the 21st century, constituting “Recent History”.

The author’s examination of Chinese discourses, particularly regarding the prehistoric synthesis of the concept of History, is primarily relevant to the appropriation, writing, and interpretation of History, as will be demonstrated subsequently. This investigation also encompasses the modern interpretation of History as presented in the discourses of the Xin Qingnian (1915-1926) and by certain modern-styled writers and intellectuals associated with it. The examination of the History of the Nation-State is fundamentally based on the critique put forth by Liang Qichao (1902).

As a country, the current People’s Republic of China, , having recently marked 74 years as a nation-state, observes October 1 as the commemoration of “New China”. A fresh state, knowledgeable at accommodating a range of “peoples” and their different ethnic-cultural peculiarities, alongside various realities, including urban environments and rural areas; furthermore, this development follows two civil wars in the 20th century and other conflicts tracing back to the 19th century. Initially, we can identify what serves as the foundational narrative that established the new Chinese nation-state: the Century of Humiliation. (Scott, 1997, pp. 22-28, 35-46; Shi Xu, 2014, p. 62) This statement, along with others, reflects various visions, interpretations, and perspectives that historical writings may present regarding Chinese history. In a manner akin to the arguments stated by Vilhena de Carvalho (2017, p. 226), this trans-systemic amalgamation constitutes a sophisticated theoretical framework and a distinctly modern History that embodies unique characteristics of China.

That means the impetus for this article is situated in the examination of how the temporal parameters surrounding the establishment of a new nation-state are impacted: figure out the evolution of governmental ideology throughout Chinese history, and how historical narratives have been instrumental in shaping the boundaries of collective memory, conveyed through an extensive Chinese literary tradition. Moreover, its role in grounding dynastic and subsequently republican authority in the conceptual construct of History serves as a mighty instrument. In addition, one must recognise that enquiries of this nature find their answers just throughout the realms of history and historiography. In this regard, it is beneficial to utilise works that are available to the Western audience—whether through translations of sinological texts or in their native Chinese design, as is the objective here.



To comprehend the synological application of the works highlighted, we shall adhere to the model illustrated by Hodge and Louie (1998, p. 16-18). It is important to point out that the ancient tradition of Chinese narratives will be examined to elucidate this explanation, thereby contributing to the broader context of State-centered discourse as a vessel for the meanings that permeate history. Furthermore, notions and concepts in Chinese will be presented in Pinyin form, each of them beginning in an uppercase letter, which helps improve the audience's comprehension.

History in China

While examining Chinese history, one can observe a consistent tradition of centralised state formations, regardless of the territorial scope and the sensitivity of its subsequent conflicts. This suggests the utilisation of a systematic approach to ascertain the efficacy of dynastic developments throughout history, framing historical narrative and its analysis as a dynamic instrument for political purposes. While many of these dynasties may not have endured as time passed, their impacts continue to resonate in the long term. In his doctoral thesis, Yi Xu (2022) underscores the significance of Qin unification (221 BCE) for the ethnic-cultural development of Chinese civilisation, framed within the concept of "Hua" (2022, p. 4-5; Holcombe, 2020, p. 35-36). In this synthesis, I wish to highlight three concepts that are instrumental in comprehending the transformation of Chinese temporal and spatial dimensions of this "transcendental" entity whose historical essence influences social dynamics, in order to challenge the "modern" facade that this article adeptly presents; these are: Zhonghua Minzu and Huaxia.

Zhong is the Chinese term for "centre" and can be interpreted in the context of the Chinese designation for China, Zhong Guo, which translates to "Middle State". Hua, appearing in both categories, represents one of the most ancient forms of literary self-reference for the people of Sinic and/or Chinese culture, and consequently, for the Chinese themselves. Guided by the series of historical and cultural dialogues we are expressing, Minzu, as interpreted through the lens of Wang Hui (2023, p. 10), recognises the emergence of this category during the dynastic intermediary period and connects it to the reified philosophies of the Song period. Huaxia is a term with multiple meaning (Guo, 2023, p. 47-48) that may appear in multiple settings, yet it gains prominence particularly from the Tang period onwards. This term serves as a narrative device that juxtaposes celestial themes with the citizens embodying the Heaven-Earth paradigm, reflecting a unique interplay within Chinese philosophical thought and its relationship with societies beyond the traditions of the Zhou Rites. Huaxia serves as a self-reference for individuals immersed in Sinic culture, who hold in high regard the rites of Zhou, the Sages, and the historical Dynasties.



This term also connotes a sense of enlightenment (Kroll, 2017, p. 167), a theme that will be explored further in the context of the New Culture Movement during the modern Chinese era.

According to Holcombe (2016, p. 12), the concept of Huaxia created a lasting unity that transcended earthly boundaries, allowing for references to various kingdoms before as well as following the unification. Moreover, this notion was cultivated during the Zhou period as a deliberate interpretation of identity. This designation was attributed by the opposition to those who were not of Hua ethnic background, referring to them as non-civilized and/or non-agrarian societies (2016, p. 13, 39).

Historically, this useful memory is related to an earlier interpretation of Chinese socio-political structures, originating from the "Rites of Zhou." This framework, established in the context of the celestial authority of Shang Di, alludes to the almost mystical Shang Dynasty and promotes the initial comprehensive cosmogonic development of pre-Chinese civilisations (BCE).

This synthesis is evident in what is regarded as the "first historical narrative," which forms a component of the corpus of literary works that engage alongside or are relevant to history. The initial work we have referenced is the "Historical Records," or *Shiji* (Bueno, 2013, p. 35-38), authored by Sima Qian (145-86 B.C.E.), often referred to as the "Great Historian." This designation, however, warrants caution, as it is an imprecise term in loose translation.

The article delves into the extensive tradition of historical writing that encompasses China. Establishing relationships with the convergence of remote ideas of "people" to whom the rites and ethics are dedicated, designed by their sages throughout Chinese intellectual and cultural history, enables us to approach the necessary perspective to deduce the assertions presented in this article.

Anagnost (1997, p. 2) elucidates the process of constructing the historical narrative that gives rise to the distinct temporality of the modern Chinese nation-state. The effort seeks to encapsulate the intricate stratigraphy of the various "times of the nation" from the recent past, characterised by a tendency to reflect on history to confront the future. André Bueno, a Brazilian professor and specialist in China, notes that among the compilations of writings attributed to Confucius (Kongzi), two have been classified as "historical" (2015, p. 32). The texts in question are the *Shujing*, known as the "Treatise on Books," and the *Chunqiu*, referred to as the "Annals of the Spring and Autumn Period." The latter was rebranded following the interregnum phase within the extensive temporal framework of the Zhou dynasty.

According to Bueno, Confucius himself was a historian, because he compiled archives and took notes. This practice is foundational to the etymology of the term for historian in Chinese, *Shi*, which denotes one who takes notes.



In the initial piece of the fourth section, which is related to Chinese studies, included in the compendium of “Oriental Studies” by Kalinowski and Lagerway (2008), the authors explore the ‘semi-religious’ interpretation that historical examination played a significant role in the early socio-political structures that contributed to certain centralist tendencies in ancient “China”. This concept is succinctly wrapped in the lineage portrayed from the Xia dynasty (2070-1600 B.C.E.), through the Shang (1600-1046 B.C.E.), and extending to the Zhou and/or Western Zhou (1046-256 B.C.E.), culminating in the first Chinese revolution, commonly referred to as the Qin-Han unification in 221 B.C.E. The dates presented here are derived from the Xia-Shang-Zhou Chronological Project, which was initiated in 1996 by the Chinese government and discussed over the works of Lee (2002) and Li (2002).

The significance of these ordinances remains critical in shaping China’s socio-political and cultural landscape. Therefore, according to the most traditional definition originating from the West, History serves as: *magistra vitae*. This interpretation of history aligns with the compilationist approach of Confucius, who, in his selection and editing of materials from the previously mentioned texts, chose those works that resonated deeper with his moral reasoning and ethical principles, reflecting the harmonious relationship between Heaven (Tian) and humanity (Earth, or, Tu [Cheng, 2008, p. 39-40]).

Furthermore, according to Wang (2005, p. 16), history has also functioned as a crucial element of cultural identity, which in Western historiographical discourse is referred to as “memory”. The primary role of the *Shi*, the annotating scribes, was regarded as the memory function, thus setting up them as the earliest historians in China (2005, p. 2, 9-10).

This conception, although restricted to the way of thinking, making and interpreting history located in the West, or around the Mediterranean coasts, coincides with what Bueno (2013, p. 36-37) points out:

The Historical Records involve various theoretical and methodological undertakings in order to formulate a more accurate chronology that would support a continuous dynastic periodization. Inspired by Confucius, Sima wanted his history to be moralistic, but at the same time based on references that he considered to be as realistic as possible. This was not very different from what Confucius himself had proposed, but Sima Qian would take this proposal to a new level of refinement, the complexity of which would influence all subsequent Chinese historiography.

Inside the framework of “form” and rhetoric (Schaberg, 2002), the discourse suggests a deep engagement with the history of Zhou bronze inscriptions and Shang oracles, which are



significant to understanding the lineage of Chinese History during its ancient era, particularly in the context of early dynastic developments. The quasi-religiosity of history during this period in China, and in subsequent eras, can be seen in the act of writing history and its interpretation, which is perceived as the engagement with a divine artefact. Similarly, Duara (1997 p. 19, 28-29) emphasises sinological studies and identifies the comprehension of Chinese history by these authors as a distinctive historical narrative that assumes its own metaphysical dimensions. The past serves as both a foundation for comprehension and a rationale for historical events. This phenomenon presents itself as incongruous, as the narrative of Modernity is both self-aware and self-justifying. Consequently, the historical subject, the modern individual, endeavours to actualise History via the Nation-State, pursuing teleological aims. According to Schaberg (2002, p. 30), this indicates that the authority inherent in the literary rhetoric of early Chinese historiographies holds more significance for the speaker as a contemporary participant in discourse, as well as for its reception.

Between knowledge and [historical] phenomena lies rhetoric, the set of habits that gives the written discourses of historiography much of their literary value and intellectual authority. (...) since these applications always occur in discourses, we must examine rhetoric to see how it can affect the knowledge that is transmitted. This rhetoric is not primarily an art of persuasion.

This illustrates the transmission of this specific literary mechanism, with its function perpetually engaging memory, as noted by Schaberg (2002, p. 58-60). For the author, this paradigm concerning memory is crucial for the interpretation of the discourse, which, enveloped by the fundamental mimesis of Chinese cultural continuity through history, issued legitimacy to the memories that would be retrieved. In other words:

Memory was a matter of constant attention to past models and was designated by the word *Nian*. The nature of this attention was indicated by the compound *Jingnian*, which adds the notion of “continuing” or carrying forward the basic concept of attention: one thinks about things so that these things, which belong to the past, can be preserved in the present.

According to Arrault (2016, p. 31), his analysis of a poem from the Tang period (812-813 CE) reveals that the initial two particles of the “verses” introduce this term, which serves to emphasise that it means the passage of time, both in singular and plural forms, in a manner that is not quantitatively measurable - only literal.



The term Nian, while considered to be a general term in contemporary Mandarin, also denotes the concept of the year in its written form. The term, in conjunction with the other words that provide it significance and context, constructs temporal dimensions that are also present in the publication that, in September 1915, debuted under the title Qingnian (or, Youth). The publication underwent the name Xin Qingnian (New Youth) starting from September 1916, as noted in the inaugural issue of its second volume.

Now, where such a vocabulary particle, from Nian, makes so much sense for the study of Chinese discourses, appropriated as historical, by thinking 'over time', or, as a word that gives meaning to an entity of time. This place where time is found in the Chinese literary language (here, written), its conjugation therefore portrays the character of the memory given by mobilising a temporal tendency that is not linear in the aspect of seeing oneself in the mirror of the past, but rather, non-linear, that is the almost constant representation and/or interpretation, perhaps for now, translated as religious, that is the visualisation of making and writing history in China over so many periods. As proposed by some sinological historians, such as the famous article by Fitzgerald (1956), *Continuity in Chinese history*, and as warned by Hodge and Louie (1998, p. 7-13) about this type of scientific-academic work.

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In this context, the vocabulary particle from Nian emerges as a significant element for the examination of Chinese discourses, particularly when considered historically, by contemplating the concept of 'over time', or as a term that imbues an entity of time with meaning. This location, where time is encapsulated within the Chinese literary language (here, inscribed), its conjugation thus reflects the essence of memory by engaging a temporal inclination that defies linearity in the act of self-reflection through the lens of the past. Instead, it embodies a non-linear approach, characterised by a nearly perpetual representation and/or interpretation, which may currently be perceived as religious. This represents the visualisation of crafting and documenting history



in China across numerous epochs. As suggested by certain sinological historians, notably in Fitzgerald's renowned article from 1956, "Continuity in Chinese History," and as cautioned by Hodge and Louie in their 1998 work (pp. 7-13) regarding this genre of scholarly endeavour.

The return to this notion of the mirror invokes an additional analogy of the sphere, which delineates the understanding of time within the framework of state ideological formulation, ultimately emphasising, above all, the dynastic aspect. In the scholarly contributions of Pamella Crossley (1999), who delves into the dynastic 'ideology' of the last Da Qing (Great Qing), alongside Rawski's (1998) examination of Qing Dynasty rituals, the interpretation of the 'mirror' that Crossley (1999, p. 23) highlights in her introduction presents an alternative perspective that diverges from Western expectations. In the reflections of Taizong (598 - 649), who held a key role during the Tang Dynasty (618-907), it is stated that 'Bronze should be used as a mirror to align clothing and thoughts; antiquity as a mirror to understand the rise and fall of states; a man as a mirror to correct his own judgement'.

The concept of establishing the status and ethical guidelines for the political governance of the state, particularly its commitment that was set aside in a previous era of state reform, at the outset of the Song period, can also be interpreted as a significant element in the memorandum addressed to Emperor Shenzong (1048-1085) of Song by Sima Guang (1019-1086). This mandarin served as a historian and municipal official, charged with the creation of a series of historical compilations detailing the past dynasties and emperors of China. As a member of an exclusive group, circa 1070. In his correspondence, he expressed opposition to the reform of the state, dealings with emissaries from the so-called "barbarian" peoples, and military reform (Barenghi, 2014, p. 3), among other matters, as evidenced in Pease's work (2021).

Additionally, he opposed Wang Anshi, the minister responsible for the Xinfu, or "New Policies," implemented during the Song periods referred to as "Serene Peace" Xining (1068-1078) and "Superior Abundance" Yuanfeng (1078-86) (Hargett, 1987, p. 32-33). The author posits that this Mandarin played a significant role in the development of a genre characterised by diligent detail, possessing an encyclopaedic nature and a sequential grasping of time (Schirokauer in De Bary, 1999, p. 653). This genre has come to be recognised as Tongjian. This genre may be interpreted as "diary in reflection (mirror)" or "comprehensible reflection," or alternatively as "Mirror for good government" (Bueno, 2008, p. 94). The compilation consists of chapters that narrate the events of China's initial attempts towards historical unification during the final stages of the Warring States period (500 B.C.E.).

Alongside the contributions of Tongjian, it is noteworthy that other authors have similarly produced and left behind comparable works. Alongside the contributions of Li Dao (1115-1184) and Yuan Shu (1131-1205), there emerges a linear perspective on history, characterised by a



compilationist nature. Particularly within these, there existed teachings on the Dao that diverged from the “official” perspective of the associated dynasties of the chosen era.

Sima Guang’s opposition to Wang Anshi’s reform was due to his political beliefs and his basic principle, the Dao, which was different from Wang’s. The Dao of the human being was separate from nature, but based on it. Wang believed that the Dao of the human being was separate from the Dao of nature, but based on it. The Dao of nature tends to change, as does that of humanity. However, Sima believed that the two types of Dao cannot be separated. The Dao of nature doesn’t change, and neither should that of humanity (Huang; Shang, 2022 *apud* Cheng, 1942).

These works from the middle Song period are distinguished by their role as a source of inspiration for dynastic governance, through which contemporary choices are established in a well-defined dialogue with historical precedents. This approach primarily aims to ensure that terrestrial changes align with celestial purposes. This exemplifies the continual pursuit of connection with one’s ancestors, emphasising the significance of this aspect for the rightful governance of the bearer of the Celestial Mandate (Tianming).

Characterised by a linear narrative structure and the objective endeavour of compiling narratives, these works introduce a new genre that holds significant importance for Chinese history. These, recognised as the pioneers of this character, remain distinctly separate from the historicist and modernist methodologies found in modern Chinese historiography.

Writing history for a Chinese modernity

The foundational principle underpinning the History of Modernity in the West is characterised by a dialectical perspective, a widely recognised notion that rationalises the passage of time and seeks to impose teleological determinations that are to be achieved. The concept of the nation-state underwent significant transformation in the 19th century, catalysing a myriad of political, social, and military movements across all continents involved with the circumstances of the Western North Atlantic during the period in question. This effort has persisted across extensive nautical miles since its origin.

For instance, the methodological research initiative that Liang Qichao initiated in 1902. The New Historiography, authored by the renowned Chinese reformist and historian, situated within the context of the Late Qing period, is crucial for comprehending the evolution of Chinese historiography



in contemporary times and when seen in light of of medium-duration temporality. Liang relates the writings of Tongjian from the Song dynasty and another from the early Qing century (notably, the 16th century [1645-1912]), regarding these works as significant efforts spanning several years by their authors, yet lacking facing validity and justification for their lasting place in the annals of history.

Liang, who categorises diverse literary-historical works according to the extensive Chinese tradition, asserts that “there was no History in China until then.” His seeks may be interpreted as an initiative to establish this field, guided by positivist and historicist principles, imbued with the scientific rigour that defines his time. Furthermore, another significant influence on the author’s work was Social Darwinism, evident in certain sections of his essay, where it serves as a rationale for establishing the historical discipline to promote the competitiveness of the “fittest”. In this publication, we neither dismiss Liang’s research and propositions nor reduce them to mere reflections of their historical context. Considering the work as instrumental in comprehending this initial scholar dichotomy of historical writing functions. In the context where Liang would hold a position, the young authors and thinkers of the Xin Qingnian likewise established their points of view, leaning towards a more iconoclastic perspective.

However, there were also distinctions, as evidenced in Chen Duxiu’s article published in the second issue of the second volume of *New Youth* in October 1916. In this piece, Chen notes that Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao contributed to the ongoing discourse in the Chinese parliament regarding the proposition of establishing Confucianism as a state religion, which was presented to the Chinese prime minister during the fresh period of the Republic of China. The disagreement between the two scholars arose from the parliament’s refusal to incorporate such a guideline into the Chinese Constitution, a point that Chen articulated in his article titled “Refutation of Kang and Liang’s letter to the Prime Minister,” where he asserted that “no one in the south or north of our country supports the measure.” In the same communication, Chen highlights two notable contradictions: firstly, the assertion that the fervent admiration for Confucianism serves as both the cause and consequence of the monarchical restoration, a phenomenon that re-emerged in December 1915 when President Yuan Shikai proclaimed himself Emperor Hong Xian; secondly, the most significant contradiction, according to Chen, lies in contrasting such enthusiasm for Confucian doctrine as a form of autocracy against the counterclaim of figures like George Washington and Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

In his 1902 essay, Liang categorises the broad Chinese historiographical tradition into ten distinct types, further setting it into twenty-two subdivisions. It is beneficial to reference them to enlighten the audience. The initial two categories are related to the *Annals of the Dynasties*, each of which, as well-known, was customarily composed by the succeeding dynasty. This specific resolution was conferred across the subsequent dynasty, which frequently usurped authority from



its predecessors through martial efforts, thereby establishing a new lineage. The act of compiling and documenting prior dynastic history served as a crucial element of legitimacy in relation to the Tianming (Heavenly Mandate).

The writings of commentators and the reflections on the studies of earlier mandarins occupy a prominent position, serving as genres that facilitate access to texts that have not survived to the present day. Additionally, there was written various dynastic documents, including imperial edicts and collections of rites and ceremonies that were conferred by each dynasty across its reign. A different genre, characterised by a more subjective approach for Liang, comprised the regional writings of certain Mandarins, which chronicled the history of a village, alongside biographies and intricate accounts of events of varying local significance. The additional classifications proposed by the author include what is termed Critical History, which serves as an extension of the examination of commentators, though in a broader sense. Furthermore, there exist works categorised as “miscellaneous,” which pertain to regional or dynastic accounting studies, particularly within the context of the Yamen¹.

While the online sources available and transcribed do not reveal any writings that possess a critical-analytical and methodological breadth comparable to that initiated by Liang, it remains a noteworthy observation. Consequently, we shall focus on the subsequent excerpts from the magazine to comprehend the context that informs the interpretation of History as articulated in the gazette. Nevertheless, Liang and the contributors of *Xin Qingnian* approach what the author advocates as the purpose of Writing History:

Because after the hundreds of thousands of works in the storehouses of history that have been examined, none of their contents are capable of helping to fulfill these desires or of giving us what we are looking for. Unfortunately! If the field of history can't bring about a revolution, then we are truly without hope. Of all the myriad subjects, this is exceptionally important. The task of making a new history. (Liang, 1902, p. 12)

Moreover, in the contemporary context of the Chinese nation-state, which is rooted in a historical foundation, we observe a socialist framework characterised by division to create a People's Republic. This national endeavour, initiated in 1949, has persisted for seven decades.

¹ Yamen, the residence of the literati-bureaucrat, or mandarin, a place where administrative measures as taxes collection and judicial matters, such as a “small claims court,” were handled. For the competence and functionality of these magistrates in the Late Dynastic period, see at: ANTONY, Robert J.; LEONARD, Jane K. **Dragons, Tigers and Dogs: Qing crisis management and the boundaries of state power in late imperial China**. Ithaca: Cornell East Asia Program, 2002.; NIMICK, Thomas G. The placement of local magistrates in Ming China. **Ch'ing shih wen t'i [Late imperial China]**, vol. 20, no. 2, p. 35–60, 1999.



The triumph achieved on October 1, 1949, by the forces of the Communist Party and its simultaneous strategic allies can be traced back to the foundational moment of the party in July 1921, at the introduction of the Republic of China. The founder of the party and its inaugural general secretary, Chen Duxiu, rose to prominence in this political sphere through his magazine, demonstrated here, which had previously drawn together a collective of new-order writers and thinkers during the initial decade of the Republic (Locks, 2024, p. 102).

Xin Qingnian (Ma, 1974) was initially released under the title Qingnian (Youth) on September 15, 1915. Published in Shanghai by Wang Mengzou, proprietor of the Yadong bookshop, this work emerged from attempts to propagate modernist concepts in China that were already circulating, particularly among exiled Revolutionary Party cadres following the event referred to as the "Second Revolution" (1913). The designation emerged as a result of, or more accurately, as an endeavour to further explore the implications of the Xinhai Revolution, which started in 1911 and culminated in the establishment of the provisional Republic in 1912. A considerable number of the most engaged and thoughtful the ranks, including Chen himself, travelled to Tokyo following the suppression of the uprising. From the Japanese archipelago, they initiated a literary endeavour, the magazine Tiger (Jiayin). Chen contributed to this magazine; however, it is not feasible to digitally trace his involvement with the publication overseen by its editor-in-chief, Du Yaquan (Jenco, 2010). In 1905, Chen collaborated with Mengzou's elder sibling, Xiyan, who, hailing from their native province, published the briefly printed "Anhuinese" Popular Speech (Anhui Suhua) (Sun, 2019, p. 26-29). The most notable aspect is its publication in Baihua, the colloquial form of the Chinese language.

In mainland China, Shanghai experienced a semblance of freedom of movement attributed to the foreign concessions established within its borders. Chen subsequently convened individuals of similar intellectual backgrounds, and the concept of a cultural revolution, aimed at shaping the ideological landscape of the nation, emerged as the primary objective of the magazine. In the inaugural edition, Chen authored pieces titled "For Youth" and "France and Modern Civilisation". In the initial article, which Chen categorises into six distinct issues, he is attempting to actualise Chinese liberation and national advancement through the lens of various forecasting he supports. The pursuit of autonomy represented for him a departure from the moral framework of virtues and ethics inherent in the Confucian tradition, particularly Loyalty (Zhong), Filial Piety (Xiao), Chastity (Jie), and Integrity (Yi). He juxtaposed these values against the master-slave dynamic, drawing on the insights of the German philosopher Nietzsche, ultimately asserting that these virtues embodied the characteristics of the slave. He perceived the History of European Modernity as a narrative of national liberations, essentially framing it as a History of the Nation-State.



Chen further advocated for the progressive ideals inherent in the Theory of Evolution, aligning them with John Mill's Utilitarianism and Comte's Experimentalism. The practice of science served as the essential illumination that Chinese modernity required to articulate its National History during that period.

The notions of Modernity and the Nation-State are interconnected through the establishment of the national army, which serves to protect and uphold the sovereignty of a given region. Additionally, the concept of the people is examined through an ethnic-racial lens, distinct from the aforementioned Minzu or Hua perspectives. Furthermore, as noted by Fung (2010, p. 8), it is essential to consider the capitalist and industrialised mode of production, alongside the political and cultural identities of its components thereby encompassing the essence of civil society. The latter necessitates the development of a socio-cultural and philosophical framework that incorporates elements of Rationalism and Enlightenment thought. The military is articulated through innovations that were implemented during the "Self-Strengthening Movement" (Ziqiang Yundong) from 1861 to 1895, under the auspices of Empress Cixi (1835-1908). The citizenry is observable in the Han recentralization at the conclusion of the Qing dynasty (1912), manifested in the synthesis symbolised by the flag of the Republic of China, featuring five colours that correspond to the five ethnic groups constituting the nation. Currently, over 52 distinct minority groups are acknowledged within the national framework of the People's Republic of China.

The one that followed essays in these issues further establish the magazine's character, including Gao Yihan's writings, translations of Western literature and Russian works, along with the foreign affairs column that provided insights into the European conflict of the era (World War I). In January 1916, within the fifth issue of the inaugural volume, Gao delineates a comprehensive vision of the National History that was to be established, echoing the fervent calls of Chen, the editor-in-chief, alongside the sentiments expressed by Liang Qichao. In "Autonomy and Freedom," drawing from the insights of the English philosopher Bosaquet in his exploration of state theory and the individual's relationship to the state, Gao advocates for the connection between National History and the actualisation of individual liberties. According to him:

From the point of view of history, it is the national state (community of individuals) that has been handed down from generation to generation since the country was founded. From the perspective of humanity, it is the communion of hearts of all human beings. Rites, laws, folk customs, politics, education and the arts are all shaped by the common nature of individuals. They are inherited from one person to another and their natures are continuous. They are manifested and recorded by history.



Even in the present, they are not objective entities that we can observe or touch. Therefore, History is the manifestation of the connection between our mind and nature. Therefore, national conditions are the characteristics of this imprint on our mind and nature. What is recorded in the past is the shadow (memory) of our mind and nature. What shines in the future is the light of our mind and nature.

Gao's focus lies in affirming the teleological framework of Modern History, shaped by individuals. This perspective, particularly relevant in early 20th century China during the republican era, seeks to address the challenges posed by imperialist aggression and aligns with Liang's call for the establishment of a National History. In the article referenced, Chen also employs Liang's sketching and aligns closely with his perspective, particularly in the interpretation of Chinese history, as evidenced by the author's analysis presented in the "New Historiography" regarding the emergence former 24 dynasties throughout Chinese history. In this regard, Chen argues that the intellectual heritage of Chinese civilisation cannot be maintained in its current form, as doing so would lead to its own collapse, failing to adapt to the realities of the 20th century through the perspective of Natural Selection.

The durable literary significance of Wen (literature, in Chinese) in China was the focal point of the New Culture modernist movement, which, as noted by Wenston (1998), begun in 1913. The current work from Forster (2019) presents a significant discourse on the literary revolution, particularly advocating for a transformation in the role of literature within the context of modern Chinese history. Alongside Chen, another prominent figure who advanced these assertions was Hu Shi, who undertook the Xin Qingnian initiative during the years 1916-17 (Guarde-Paz, 2017). Hu wrote an article titled "Preliminary Discussion on Literary Reform" in January 1917, featured in the fifth issue of the second volume of the magazine. In this work, he advocated for a transformation in Chinese literature, identifying the teleology of modernity and the individual essence of the modern self as essential characteristics that the New Literature must adopt. In addition to delineating eight measures for implementing the reform (Carvalho, 2020, p. 23-24), the author emphasised the foundational elements that would propel this literary reform movement in another text entitled "Historical Concepts of Literature," featured in the subsequent volume of the magazine. In the article, Hu posits that the teleological application of history for each period entails the subjugation of its historical context through the literature of that era, asserting that for Chinese modernity, vernacular literature plays a pivotal role in this revolutionary shift.

The vernacular, or vernacular language, is etymologically the written representation of the language as it exists in its spoken language. It is understood that dialects, slang, and accents influence our perception and signify our linguistic heritage. This indicates that the Chinese



language has been crystalized for centuries in the realm of Wen (literature), whereas popular languages and regional dialects developed along distinct paths. Hu himself asserts that vernacular writing attempts have been evident since the Southern Song period, and he holds them in high regard. Subsequently, during the Yuan, Ming, and ultimately the Qing dynasties, this inclination expanded towards the peripheries, as each dynasty, particularly the latter two, adopted its distinct approach to the re-establishment of literary orthodoxy.

Kaske (2008) illustrates the crucial function of organisations and individuals who were at the forefront during the transition from the 19th to the 20th century, employing Baihua as a tool for language politics. Nonetheless, a fundamental inquiry arises regarding the reasons behind the fact that it was exclusively during the New Culture period that literary attempts of this sort sparked a broader audience. One approach to addressing this inquiry is to consider the establishment of government commissions and associations that have produced compilations of the Chinese language, aimed at its unification as a National Language. The alternative approach involves the convergence of the emerging Chinese mass movement during the second decade of the century with the literary and linguistic avant-garde movement. Both, favoured in this context by Xin Qingnian's selection, attained its height following the Paris Conference of 1919, which formalised the transfer of former German territories, localized in Qingdao, at the Shandong province and vanquished after the First World War to Japan

The impassioned appeals and discourses within the "New Tend," articulated by the magazine's group of writers, reached their full potential during the protest of May 4, 1919, in Beijing. The implications of this movement, its elevation, are inherently reflected in both its substance and its significance. Wakeman Jr. (in. 2012, p. 155) employs Maoist literature - and, as interpreted through orthodox perspectives (Vilhena de Carvalho, 2017 apud Li, 2012) - to establish a connection that facilitates the transition from the Chinese modern period to the contemporary era.

Conclusion

Considering the discussions presented above, it is essential to acknowledge the extensive tradition that China possesses regarding the long tradition that China has with the Writing History, locally. The theoretical foundations of its History serve as a criterion that connects various entities, imbued with a quasi-mystical quality concerning form and rhetoric. This framework acts as a means of suspending the justification of state authority in the organisation of public memory, the structuring of culture, and the regulation of societies—an endeavour that has unfolded throughout the millennia of Chinese history through this particular lens. In examining the genres within their varied contexts, History emerges as a unique discipline, distinct from other themes—occasionally literary, occasionally philosophical in nature. It encompasses the



consequences of lasting events throughout its extensive narrative and promotes epistemological and methodological traditions that are beneficial for preparing the Brazilian and Western public for a non-hegemonic approach to global knowledge production, as noted by Shi-Xu (2014, p. 40).

Wang Hui (2016, p. 51) illustrates that the magazine *Xin Qingnian's* approach to politicisation and articulation, engaging with political demands across diverse subjects, reinterpreted Chinese history in a manner distinct from Liang's proposals. Liang and Kang had committed an act of treachery against the republic, as they had contributed to the conceptualisation of reforms and reconciliations within the dynastic state. *Xin Qingnian* departs from this legacy, not merely through its iconoclastic stance and the social Darwinism espoused in its initial volumes, but also in its structure and rhetoric, broadening its historical narrative to advocate for concepts of "self-awakening" and nationalism. The World War and the abandonment of Chinese self-determination significantly influenced the trajectory of the nation, particularly for the youth who were progressively articulating political and social interpretations, alongside historical and dialectical assertions, that diverged markedly from the established traditions of the past.

This article further illustrates the concept of history as a mechanism that enables the construction of culture over time, enabling the emergence of a nation-state in the context of modernity, rather than the reverse process. The causal relationship does not suggest a diminishment of any categories for the sake of political agendas; rather, it illustrates the inherent connection of these patterns, which possess both legitimacy and involvement in History, as they are articulated through the lens of contemporary contexts they display. They contemplate, serving as both the product of their era and as a symbolic mirror, similar to the concept articulated by the early and middle-dynastic Chinese historians.

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