

## The Emergence of Modern Psychology in China, 1876 – 1929

Writing the history of psychology is an interpretive activity (Blumenthal, 1979; Brock, 2006; Danziger, 1979; Harris, 1980; Henle, 1978) that often serves political needs (Danziger, 1994; O'Donnell, 1979; Samelson, 1980; Teo, 2005). An externalist understanding of the history of psychology, as contrasted to the internalist, celebratory one, provides us with critical lenses to understand the constructed nature and the sociopolitical function of psychology as a discipline (Furumoto, 1989; Harris, 1980; Jones & Elcock, 2001; Richards, 2002). Particularly, a sociopolitical history of the genesis of psychology as a discipline in a given region raises important questions including, but not limited to: What social-political condition made the emergence of psychology possible? What purposes did psychology serve in that context? When psychology was imported from another country, such being the case in China, how was it shaped by the international dynamics? What factors influenced the reception of psychology into the new society?

A postcolonial history of the emergence of modern psychology in China has been missing in the English literature. Most relevant articles either do not pay particular attention to the complex dynamics between psychology and China's political situation around the turn of the twentieth century (Ching, 1980; Han & Zhang, 2007; Higgins & Zheng, 2002; Jing, 1994; Jing & Fu, 2001; Li, 1994; Miao & Wang, 2003; Petzold, 1987; Shen, 2006; Wang, 1993), limit the scope to one aspect of the history (Blowers, 2000), or ignore significant events and political motives that promoted the institutionalization of psychology in China (Blowers, 2006).

When China imported modern psychology during 1876 to 1929, it was suffering a number of international wars, civil conflicts, social movements and cultural changes embedded within the colonization and modernization processes. Through comparing this period with China's earlier social, political and intellectual condition, I argue that social-political changes made the import of psychology into China possible. Through reconstructing and comparing three periods of institutionalizing psychology in China, I make it clear that psychology as a social apparatus can be used for achieving disparate political ends. My historical analysis also shows that in each period, the import of psychology heavily rested on historical, political, social, cultural, linguistic, and/or geographic contingency, revealing the constructed nature of psychology as a discipline in China.

As Danziger (1994) argues, the international diversification of psychology constitutes one important critical historical scholarship. The “peripheral psychologies” in many countries exhibit developmental patterns that are different from American psychology, and literature on these patterns offers new understanding to not only critical historiography of psychology, but also critical psychology. An investigation into the social role of psychology in China broadens our definition of critical psychology. In modern capitalist Western societies, critical psychology is often understood as related to social justice (Fox & Prilleltensky, 1997; Hook, Kiguwa, & Mkhize, 2004; Prilleltensky, 2001). However, when psychology was being imported into China, the most urgent issue Chinese people were facing was not social justice. It was instead the survival of a whole nation undergoing wars and colonization. China’s desperate struggle for independence and modernization naturally rendered psychology a political endeavor, without drawing the mainstream/critical dichotomy usually assumed by Western psychologists. Similarly, many aspects of psychology in China, such as the emphasis on applying psychology in education, refuting the feudal ideology and the neglect of indigenization, can only be properly understood against the sociopolitical condition that gave rise to modern psychology in China.

### **China’s Sociopolitical Condition and Indigenous Psychological Thought**

Just like in Europe, there have been rich reflexive discourses in China since ancient times, e.g., Tao Te Ching around 436 BC (LaFargue, 1998) and The Analects of Confucius in 436-402 BC (Confucius, 2007). Instead of constituting a unitary discipline, these traditional reflexive discourses were embodied in a variety of philosophical, political, and educational thoughts, common sense, folklore, art, etc. The relevant theories, concepts, assumptions, objectives and approaches often display features that are distinct from the Western modern psychology. Chinese thinkers and ordinary people often favored intuitive, synthetic, contextual and dialectical understanding over the rational, analytical, reductive and formal thinking that nourished modern scientific psychology. For example, contrary to Western thought, which heavily rests on the dichotomies between mind and matter, between individual and society, between rationality and emotionality, and between fact and value, Chinese psychological thought had a holistic orientation toward lifeworld praxis. The Neo-Confucian philosopher Yangming Wang (1472–1529) argued that the mind is not an entity or a function of the body that is separable from the context; instead, it is a process or an event of illuminating the world (Wang, 1963). To Wang, the exclusive pursuit of outward, objectified truth rules out the meaning of life. Similar to Wang, many Chinese thinkers understood that psychological knowledge should be flexible, contingent, and interpretable; that objectivity is not the highest value; and that ethics and meaning are inherent dimensions of psychological knowledge. Traditional Chinese thinkers had little interest in putting subjects into laboratories, isolating psychological processes from meaningful contexts, breaking mental life into disparate elements, reading the mind with machines, or generating universal, abstract causal laws for technological control over human being.

Critical theorists (Habermas, 1971) and psychologists (Fox & Prilleltensky, 1997) have argued that psychological knowledge is often developed with practical concerns within

particular social and political contexts. In Western countries modern psychology developed through the convergence of philosophy and natural science, embedded in the scientific revolution, industrialization and modernization. In contrast, the collective, feudal China put most of its energy into governance and agriculture and had little interest in individual subjectivity. Such political-economic environment provided little impetus for developing modernist psychological knowledge. Further, the limited endemic development of natural-scientific thinking and technology did not enable fixing the intangible psychological phenomena to numbers and variables. The traditional Chinese reflexive discourses were pragmatic arts instead of positivist science, and had never been separated from their everyday contexts. It is not surprising that modern psychology was, when being introduced into China, “unrecognizable to the Chinese, who had to discover, adopt and adapt it along with other strange new things from the West” (Bond, 2010, p. 5). Since then, the traditional Chinese reflexive discourses were gradually replaced instead of incorporated into modern psychology. It was not until the early 1980s that psychology in China started being indigenized (Yang, 1997; Hwang, 2005).

Based on this discontinuity assumption, the present article starts from the late nineteenth century, when psychology was imported into China. During 1876 to 1929 China suffered five international wars, a series of civil conflicts and social reformations. Thousand-year-old political, social and ideological systems were rapidly disintegrated and reassembled as a result of and as a reaction to the multifaceted crises. The feudal society came to an end; colonization and modernization took off hand in hand. Western knowledge and practice was brought into China by both Western colonizers and Chinese reformers and became integrated with the collapsing feudal society. Having refused foreign contact for several centuries, the Qing Dynasty met modern psychology for the first time through three consecutive international encounters: Western mission activity (1876-1900), China’s education reform imitating Japan (1901-1908), and access to US education (since 1909), all of which took place with great political, cultural, geographical or linguistic contingency. In these different periods, psychology as an intellectual instrument was imported into China with various political agendas: within the missionary project, psychology was used to facilitate religious teaching; within the social reformation, psychology was explored by Chinese politicians and educated individuals to liberate and modernize the semi-colonized, semi-feudal China. Along with this historical-political line, I shall discuss how a) the Chinese elites’ favorable attitudes facilitated the reception of psychology with emphasis on its applied dimension; b) the Chinese government played an important role in the development of psychology; c) modern psychology was understood as an advanced Western product and thus resisted early indigenization proposal; and d) Chinese culture, language, and the input from Japanese scholars only influenced psychology at the level of translation.

### **Importing Mental Philosophy and Psychology through Mission Activity, 1876-1900**

The import of Western psychological ideas into China can be traced to the Italian missionaries of the late sixteenth century (Aleni, 1922; Sambiasi & Xu, 1965; Ricci, 2001). However, these events had no meaningful influence on the development of psychology in

China. In the secured, stable Ming Dynasty, traditional Chinese reflexive discourse was still dominating scholars' as well as ordinary people's ways of thinking. Not much change took place until the two Opium Wars around the middle of the nineteenth century. By that time, the Qing government was corrupted and incompetent; people were struggling for a living in the economic recession. Many Western countries were, in contrast, undergoing or already undergone astonishing economical, technological and political transformations. To extend the market, Western merchants smuggled huge amounts of opium into China. The opium trade caused an international conflict and finally resulted in the two Opium Wars between Britain, France and China in 1840 and 1856. The defeated Qing government was forced to sign unequal treaties, permitting Britain, France, the United States, and a few other countries who took advantage of the Opium Wars, to establish mission schools in China. Having refused foreign contact since 1757, China was forced to open its doors again to the West and thus encountered mental philosophy and modern psychology. The earliest identifiable mental philosophy course was taught by the missionary Calvin Wilson Mateer (1836—1908) in 1876 at Teng Choa College, a famous mission school. Another two institutions that offered mental philosophy courses were Saint John's University and Luhe College, both being mission schools as well. Mental philosophy was usually a required or prerequisite course for theology, for the purpose of facilitating religious teaching. Three decades later, when Saint John's University was transformed into a public university, it changed the mental philosophy course into experimental psychology, introducing the latest theories, methods, and texts (Ma, 1984). Thus mental philosophy in the mission schools not only introduced similar topics of psychological study, but also eased institutional transition to psychology; it heralded psychology in a way similar to what had happened in the United States of America, as Fuchs (2000) describes it.

In addition to introducing mental philosophy and modern psychology into the curriculum, the mission schools also provided the earliest opportunities for Chinese students to study psychology abroad. One of these students was Yan Yongjing. After studying psychology in Kenyon College in the United States, Yan Yongjing came back to China and became the head of Saint John's University in Shanghai. In 1889, Yan Yongjing (1889) translated Joseph Haven's (1862) *Mental Philosophy*. As the text used by Mateer in the earliest mental philosophy course is regrettably lost, Yan Yongjing's translation becomes the earliest identifiable psychology textbook in China. *Mental Philosophy* is a mixture of moral philosophy, modern psychology and religious teaching. While following the speculative tradition, *Mental Philosophy* introduces many topics that were later studied by scientific psychology, such as perception, memory, reasoning, and imagination. The author, Joseph Haven, was a theological scholar and a pastor (Vaughn, 2006), and the book was unsurprisingly concluded with the statement that God's power surmounts human psychology. The difficult translation process reveals the culture-ladenness of psychology. In the preface Yan Yongjing noted: "Many of the ideas have never existed in China, nor do they have a name here... I have to relate Chinese words in novel ways with great difficulty" (Yan, 1889, p. 1). He even had to coin a term to name the new discipline, psychology.

Although mission activities against the colonial background opened the first doors for Chinese people to study Western psychology, their actual influence was limited. The teaching

of mental philosophy and psychology was mainly confined within mission schools, exerting little influence outside. Psychology was in the service of religion instead of being an independent discipline per se. Yan Yongjing only translated the first volume of *Mental Philosophy* and died before finishing the second one. Many terms coined by him have been commented on as being difficult to comprehend (Yang, 2000). To see an expansion of psychology in China, we need look at the education reform in the first decade of the twentieth century.

### **Importing Modern Psychology from Japan, 1900-1908**

The education reform took place as a reaction to the crises China was facing at the end of the nineteenth century. After the two opium wars, China lost another two international wars: the First Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895) and the war between China and the Eight-Nation Alliance (1900-1901). Both of the two wars ended up with unequal treaties that granted the Western countries more control over the politics, economy, military and culture of China. The rampaging colonization and the incapability of the Qing government provoked two peasant movements: the Taiping Rebellion (1850-1864) threatened the Qing government by taking over many provinces and establishing a new regime; the Boxer Rebellion (1898-1901) vehemently attacked foreigners in northern China. The bourgeois also took its action by promoting the Hundred Days' Reform (1898), a nationwide political, cultural and educational reformation that did not endure for a long time. Lastly, the feudal political leaders divided into two camps: the conservatives insisted on adhering to Chinese tradition while the Westernization advocates called for "learning the Western skills in order to combat Western colonizers" (Wei, 1876). The latter camp promoted the import of Western psychology into China.

The defeat of the First Sino-Japanese war in 1895 came as not only a loss and humiliation, but also an impetus for change. Japan, with its small population and limited natural resources, had never been viewed by China as a significant rival. Yet within less than thirty years after the Meiji Restoration (1868), Japan gained incredible strength and successfully challenged its once powerful neighbor. To the Qing government, there were important lessons to be learnt from Japan's reformation. One of these lessons pertained to education; in the words of the famous politician Yuan Shikai (1901/1987, 270), "cultivating competent men is the foundation of a government". In the "Proposal for the Qing Government to promote schools", Li Ruifen (1983, p. 63) suggested "the number of elites determines the strength of a country. Never complain that we have no talented children; we just fail in education." What was wrong, then, with China's education? Since the year 607, China had practiced the Imperial Examination for more than a thousand years. As a political-academic institution, the Imperial Examination served as a gateway for the government to select officers (Higgins & Sun, 2002). It focused on the study of social knowledge and literature instead of natural science and technology; in other words, it promoted little material production and technical innovation. In comparison, the Western colonizers were well equipped by modern science and technology. Upon reflection on its defeats, the Qing government decided to introduce modern Western knowledge into the curriculum and to make education available to

a wider population. Imitating Japan's new education system, the "abolishing Imperial Examination, promoting modern schools" movement took off with imperial support. China took a big step toward modernization.

The Qing government promulgated several consecutive orders, including "Qinding xuetaang zhangcheng" in 1902 (Zhang, 1902/1986) and "Zouding xuetaang zhangcheng" in 1903 (Zhang, 1903/1972). The former order gave birth to the Imperial University of Beijing, which offered psychology courses (Beijing Normal University Writing Board, 1982) while the latter order required all advanced teacher education programs to offer psychology courses. In the previous Imperial Examination system, receiving education was a luxury; now education became widely available. In 1903 China had 769 schools and 31,428 students, while in 1905 it had 8,277 schools and 258,873 students (Wang, 1986). The number of schools increased by 875% and of students by 624% within only two years. This rapid growth in school and student number presented psychology to a wider audience.

To make up the shortage of teachers and schools and to import modern knowledge, the Chinese government invited Japanese teachers into China and many Chinese students went to Japan to study. In 1906, over 500 Japanese teachers were employed in Chinese schools (Sanetō, 1981), and approximately 12,000 Chinese students were studying in Japan, most of them in teacher training programs, in which psychology was part of the curriculum (Yang, 2007). This international communication not only depended on geographical vicinity but also on linguistic-cultural similarity:

"Japanese language is close to Chinese language and thus easy to understand; Western languages are, in contrast, very complicated. Wherever the Western study is not refined, the Japanese scholars make improvement. It is easy for China to learn from Japan since the two countries have similar culture and custom. There is no easier or more effective way than learning from Japan."  
(Sun, 1988, p. 87)

Thus in the first decade of the twentieth century, the import of psychology mainly took its way through Japan in the form of teaching, translation, and publication (for example, Hattori, 1902; Kubota, 1903; Ohse & Tachigara, 1903; Chen, 1905). Among the thirty-three textbooks published between 1889-1910 (Wan, 1987), eleven were translated from Japanese texts, while most were done by Chinese scholars trained in Japan. Based on the idea of saving China through education, psychology was most closely connected with education (Miao & Wang, 2003).

In 1907 Wang Guowei translated *Outline of Psychology* (Wang, 1907/1931) from the Danish psychologist Harold Høffding's text (Høffding, 1893). This text states explicitly that psychology is a science that emphasizes experimental method and the physiological basis of the mind. A comparison between Wang Guowei and Yan Yongjing's works reveals how the translation of psychology was caught between Chinese culture, Western thought and Japanese influence. Both Wang Guowei and Yan Yongjing had to coin new terms for many psychological concepts, including the very name of the discipline, psychology, for which Yan Yongjing used "Xin-Ling Xue" (the study of the heart and spirit) while Wang Guowei used "Xin-Li Xue" (the study of the principle of heart). Both of the two terms include the character

“heart”, since traditional Chinese people believed that mental activity is ultimately in charge of the heart.

An interesting difference between Wang Guowei and Yan Yongjing’s translations is that the former emphasizes “spirit” and the latter highlights “principle”. Yang Xinhui (Yang, 2000) explains that “Ling” (spirit) is close to the ancient Greek “soul” or “psyche”, the etymological origin of “psychology”. In this sense, “Ling” reminds of the historical and philosophical origin of psychology, whereas “Li” (principle) invokes the scientific aspect of psychology. Disagreeing with this ahistorical, decontextualized reasoning, I suggest that “Ling” (spirit) is more likely to stem from its religious context. The textbook *Mental Philosophy* is religious and was intended to be used in mission schools. Both the author and the translator were pastors. The publisher, Yizhi Book Club, was a Christian press that aimed at “spreading religious teaching”. This evidence supports a connection between religion and “Ling” (spirit).

In the first decade of the twentieth century, psychology found its sociopolitical position greatly changed: mission schools were replaced by (or transformed into) “pure” educational institutions; Euro-American missionaries were superseded by Japanese scholars. Promoted by the Qing government, psychology was becoming officially institutionalized; by serving education instead of religion, it assumed the historical role of saving the semi-colonized China. Japan’s contribution to modern psychology in China, however, should not be overestimated. The most traceable Japanese influence remained at the level of translation. Despite coming via Japan, psychology in China kept its Western heritage intact – even Japanese psychologists of that time were imitating their Western peers (Sato & Sato, 2005). Japan’s contribution in the history of Chinese psychology is more contextual than intellectual, and more formal than substantial.

### **Access to Education in the United States, since 1909**

After the Eight-Nation Alliance occupied Beijing, the Qing government was fined war reparations of about 24 million dollars by the US. However, the Chinese government later discovered that it awarded the US more than originally demanded. Under pressure from China, the American Congress thus decided in 1907 to use the difference to establish the “Boxer Rebellion Indemnity Scholarship Program” for supporting Chinese students to study in the US. As part of the program, Tsinghua College was established in Beijing to prepare the qualifying.

Partly due to the funded access to American education, Japan’s influence on China’s education waned. In 1907, there were about 10,000 Chinese students studying in Japan; the following year the number drastically decreased to 3,000. In 1911, there were only 1,400 Chinese students left in Japan (Yang, 2007). In the immediate future many Chinese graduates who received American education turned out to be extremely influential in the development of psychology in China. In comparison, students who returned from Japan only made mediocre contributions (Chen, 2002; Xiong, 2007). For example, the most significant pioneers in modern Chinese psychology include Heqin Chen (1892-1982), Yaoxiang Zhang (1893-1964) and Xiaorong Xiao (1897-1963), who graduated from Columbia University; Shu Pan (1897-1988) and Zhiwei Lu (1894-1970), who graduated from the University of Chicago,

Jingxi Wang (1893-1968) from Johns Hopkins University, Yue Tang (1891-1987) from Cornell University, Guohua Sun (1902-1958) from Ohio State University, Renyuan Guo (1898-1970) from University of California at Berkeley, and Xiangeng Zhou (1903-1996) from Stanford University. In comparison, among graduates from Japanese universities, only Daqi Chen (1886-1983) and Zhixian Zhu (1908-1991) are considered to be amongst the most important Chinese psychologists of that period. The US became the center for training psychologists who completed the task of institutionalizing psychology in China.

### **The Final Establishment of Psychology as a Discipline in Modern China**

After consecutive defeats and heavy losses, the Qing government almost gave up resistance. Disappointed and enraged by the incompetent government, part of the imperial military force and the Chinese Revolutionary Alliance initiated the Xinhai Revolution in 1911. This revolution quickly overthrew the Qing government and established the Republic of China. The new republican regime, however, was far from secured. The second provisional president, Yuan Shikai, turned out to have ambitions of restoring the monarchy; he broke the constitution and got engaged in several wars with the revolutionary forces. Subsequent political chaos and wars lasted for several decades. Meanwhile, drastic cultural changes also took place: from 1915 onwards, a number of educated Chinese elites initiated the New Culture Movement in order to spread democracy and modern science. In this turbulent political and cultural environment, the institutionalization of psychology in China was finally completed.

When the Xinhai Revolution took place in 1911, Cai Yuanpei was taking courses with Wundt in Leipzig. Soon after the revolution succeeded, Cai Yuanpei became China's national education administrator and then the head of Beijing University, the most prestigious university in China. With his high governmental and academic position, Cai Yuanpei made significant contributions to institutionalizing psychology. In 1917 Cai Yuanpei supported Chen Daqi to establish China's first psychology laboratory at Beijing University. Cai Yuanpei also made efforts to establish a psychology department in 1919 but did not succeed until 1926, thus only barely missing the accomplishment of creating China's first psychology department. Upon Cai Yuanpei's advice, the psychology department at Beijing University had an experimental emphasis; this emphasis is argued to have influenced the future widespread experimental orientation in Chinese psychology (Yang, 2000). In 1929, as the head of China Central Research Academy, Cai Yuanpei further advocated the establishment of the Institute of Psychology of Chinese Academy of Science, a national research institute.

The particular location of psychology research and teaching institutes was greatly influenced by political contexts. During the mission activity period, most mental philosophy courses were taught in Beijing, Shanghai, Shandong and other early colonized provinces. During the education reform period, most Japanese scholars were invited to major and coastal cities that were under the influence of the central government and were easy to travel to. By that time, psychology in China had been largely caught between international influence and the Qing government. Since 1911, the Xinhai Revolution and other civil conflicts joined the historical course of psychology in China. The Xinhai Revolution established a new capital

city in Nanjing; Nanjing and surrounding areas then became a new center for the development of psychology. In 1920, the South-Eastern University in Nanjing established the first psychology department in China. One year later, Zhang Yaoliang founded the Chinese Psychological Society at Nanjing Higher Normal University. In 1922, the Chinese Psychological Society started publishing *Psyche*, the first psychology journal in China. By 1929, China had a few psychology departments, a national research institute, a national society and a journal, despite the number of Chinese psychologists remaining very limited.

Soon after becoming the new president, Yuan Shikai used Confucius ideology to support his monarchy. Frustrated by the ultimate failure of the Xinhai Revolution, a number of influential Chinese scholars decided that economic, political and technological innovation must be complemented with modern culture and ethics. They promoted the New Culture Movement between 1915 and 1923. Under the slogan “Science and Democracy”, the New Culture Movement was aimed at breaking the feudal ideology and spreading modern thought. Confucianism and other traditional thought, having sustained China’s social order for thousands of years, were now renounced by many scholars. The rich traditional reflexive discourses lost favor in academia and became replaced by Western psychology. In a letter, Guo Renyuan wrote to Cai Yuanpei: “the old psychology has been destroyed, whereas the new psychology still needs to be developed” (Liu, 2006, p. 31). While appreciating Western methodology, Cai Yuanpei had a very early indigenization proposal, namely that traditional Chinese culture should be incorporated into the modern psychology (Yang, 1998). However, this insight was not received favorably, possibly due to the incompatible zeitgeist.

Psychology as a social apparatus had played various political roles since its first presence in China. During the mission activity period it served a religious purpose; during the education reform period it was used to facilitate teaching; and now it undertook a heavier task in China’s deepening political and cultural crises. Petzold suggests that “scientific psychology was even seen as a means of democratizing and modernizing the country” (Petzold, 1987, p. 218). Sun Yat-sen, the leader of Xinhai Revolution and the first provisional president of the Republic of China, wrote a three-volume book, *A Constructive Scheme for Our Country*, with “Psychological Development” as its first chapter. Sun Yat-sen believed that “national development depends on the citizen’s psyche” (Sun, 1994, p. 64) and that “the foundation of a nation is built upon its psychology” (p. 73), which highlights the political significance of psychology. Yang Paoan analyzed the psychology of youth in relation to social movements and political engagement (Yang, 1919). Chen Daqi wrote the articles “Refuting the Study of the Supernatural” (Chen, 1918) and “The Mental Phenomena” (Chen, 1919) from a scientific psychological perspective in order to refute superstitious beliefs in the traditional Chinese culture. All these works, though varying in content, shared a similar assumption that psychological research is important for liberating and modernizing China. Wang Jingxi retrospectively writes:

“About fifteen years ago, there was a cause that made psychology gradually popular. By that time, many people had the belief that in order to revolutionize China, they must...conduct thorough research. Psychology is one of such research. I remember many students studied psychology with such a belief.” (Wang, 1933, p.13)

Other important psychologists, including Cai Yuanpei, Liao Shicheng (Li, 2004), Xiao Xiaorong (Xiao, 1990) and Pan Shu (Pan, 1987), expressed similar ideas. Facing the social needs, Chinese psychologists always gave great emphasis to the applied aspects of psychology, especially psychology's potential contribution to education. Cai Yuanpei made it very clear that modern education should be based on experimental psychology (Cai, 1959). Since the end of Qing Dynasty, educational psychology had been one of the most popular fields besides general psychology (Wan, 1987). Among the three hundred and eleven psychology books published in China from 1922 to 1940, sixty-four of them belong to educational psychology (Zhang, 1940). In contrast to the emphasis on applied psychology, theoretical psychology was less common.

## **Conclusion**

Through above reconstruction and analysis, I show the socially constructed nature and the sociopolitical function of psychology discipline in the context of Chinese society. In ancient China, the agricultural, feudal social structure and synthetic philosophy did not transform the rich indigenous reflexive discourses into a modern, scientific discipline. In this economic, political and cultural environment, the introduction of Western psychological thoughts into China in the sixteenth century did not have an impact on Chinese society. It was not until the late 1800s that mental philosophy and modern psychology had a second opportunity to find purchase in China. First of all, international wars opened China's doors that had been closed for centuries. At a much deeper level, the international wars and civil conflicts set the once stable Chinese society into motion, generating various impetuses for psychology to enter Chinese society, politics and culture. In the three periods – the Western mission activity period (1876-1900); China's education reform period (1901-1908); and the US education period (since 1909) – the import of psychology always rested upon historical, political, cultural, linguistic, and/or geographical contingency, and was utilized for achieving disparate political agendas. Modern psychology was once a tool for colonizing China but was finally transformed into a part of the social project of liberating and modernizing China. These social agendas promoted applied psychology, especially educational psychology. Being viewed as an "advanced" Western product, psychology in China retained its Euro-American lineage and resisted the earliest proposals for indigenization. The various historical roles assigned to psychology in the half-century's national/international struggle, though not fully realized, greatly facilitated the import and reception of Western psychology into China, as well as shaping its features.

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