

Gu Jiegang's "Discussion of Ancient History" Movement and Its Relationship with Developments in Western Sinology

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Abstract: The scholarship in modern China is closely related to Western sinology in terms of school ties. Gu Jiegang's launching of the "Discussion of Ancient History" movement centered on the "theory of the accumulated creation of Chinese ancient history" was a representative example. At the beginning of the movement, Hu Shi and Gu Jiegang proposed the notion that, "there was no history before the Eastern Zhou Dynasty" which was indebted to the historical skepticism by Philip Van Ness Myers (American scholar) and Friedrich Hirth (German sinologist) of the same period. The idea that "the Shang Dynasty is still in the late Stone Age" advocated by Hu and Gu was also directly influenced by J. G. Andersson's *An Early Chinese Culture*. Conversely, American sinologist Arthur W. Hummel Sr. played a key role in introducing and evaluating the first volume of *Discussion of Ancient History* to Western academia. Paradoxically, while Swedish sinologist Bernhard Karlgren wrote *On the Authenticity and Nature of the Tso Chuan* to refute Kang Youwei's reinterpretation of Confucian Classics (*The Forged Classics of the Wang Mang Period*), his work however became of value for Chinese historic doubt scholars to reaffirm the value of New Text Confucianism and advance the "Discussion of Ancient History" movement. If we would like to choose a saying to describe the relationship between the "Discussion of Ancient History" movement and Western Sinology, the Chinese proverb, "Stones from other hills may serve to polish jade of this one," may be an appropriate choice.

Keywords: Western sinology; "Discussion of Ancient History" Movement; history of academic exchanges between China and foreign countries

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In 1946 Gu Jiegang, as a chief writer, said in the *Introduction of Contemporary Historiography in China* that over the past century, though it was unfair to say that Chinese people made no progress, the progress was so slow. A century ago, we fell far behind westerners in culture; after a hundred years passed by, our culture still slowly trailed after the westerners. Being such a far cry from Western culture, we felt truly ashamed in front of our ancestors. However, during this period, our culture has also seen relatively rapid progress in various sectors, among which historiography is the most fruitful. So, it shall be meaningful to make a summary of this most fruitful scholarship and historiography.^①

However, such fruitful achievements in historiography are primarily attributed to the adoption of Western culture. The “Discussion of Ancient History” movement is a striking example. Gu Jiegang spoke his mind that since the founding of the Republic of China, the Western methods of scholarly research and new historical views had been constantly introduced to China, bringing a deep enlightenment to people... Under such circumstances, he proposed discussing several issues related to ancient history and soon thereafter “Discussion of Ancient History” started.^② In fact, compared with the abstract term “Western methods of scholarly research and new historical views,” Western sinology has exerted more direct influence. He also stressed, the western scholars had made great contributions to sinology study and their achievements had been introduced into China, spurring on Chinese scholars and driving Chinese historiography forward accordingly.^③ Thus, it is necessary to tease out and investigate the “Discussion of Ancient History” movement from the perspective of Western sinology in as much detail as possible.^④

The academia has already achieved some research results on this issue. The most representative disquisition thereof is Li Xiaoqian’s *Sinology Outside China and the “Discussion of Ancient History” Movement*, in which full and accurate data are used to systematically explore the complicated relationships between the sinology outside China and the “Discussion of Ancient History” movement.^⑤ He later revised and enlarged this paper to be *Sinology Outside China and Antiquity Studies* and added it to the *Sinology and Modern Historiography in China* as a chapter.^⑥ From today’s perspective, Li Xiaoqian’s research results at least have the following problems: the first is that his perspective is focused on the historical skepticism of Western sinology and Bernhard Karlgren’s *On the Authenticity and Nature of the Tso Chuan*, giving too little care to J. G. Andersson’s archaeological conclusions and Arthur W. Hummel Sr.’s introduction. The second problem is that, in term of perspectives on specific issues, he fails to effectively demonstrate the academic associations between Western sinology like Myers’ historical skepticism and the “Discussion of Ancient History” movement, and then overstates the role of Bernhard Karlgren’s *On the Authenticity and Nature of the Tso Chuan*, with some cognition deviations.^⑦ Therefore, there is still room for further development and the necessity for corrections on this issue.

① Gu, 2011, p.322.

② Gu, 2011, p. 428.

③ Gu, 2011, p. 324.

④ In general, sinology outside China can mainly be divided into two parts, namely, Western sinology and Japanese sinology. The scope of this paper is limited to the relationship between Western sinology and the “Discussion of Ancient History” movement. As for the complicated relationship between Japanese sinology and “Discussion of Ancient History” movement, please refer to the author’s “The Trend of Historical Pyrrhonism in Meiji Japan and the Doubting Antiquity Movement in Republican China”, *Historiography Quarterly*, 2016 (1).

⑤ Li, 2013

⑥ Li, 2014, pp.50–119.

⑦ In fact, from the perspective of Japanese sinology, Li Xiaoqian’s research also have some problems. As limited to the paper, it is not allowed to go to details on these issues. Please refer to the “The Trend of Historical Pyrrhonism in Meiji Japan and the Doubting Antiquity Movement in Republican China”.

1. Historical skepticism by Myers and Friedrich Hirth and the “Discussion of Ancient History” movement

On May 6, 1923, Gu Jiegang published *A Letter Discussing Ancient History with Qian Xuantong* on *Dushuzazhi* No. 9 and proposed a theory of “ancient Chinese history being created layer upon layer” in the notes of the article. Right after its publication, the theory became an “atomic bomb dropped on ancient Chinese history,” arousing “an uproar” in the circle of humanities^①, and the “Discussion of Ancient History” movement centered on “theory of the accumulated creation of Chinese ancient history” arose.

It was no later than the late 19th century when Western sinologists began to doubt the ancient Chinese history. In May 1935, Cheng Jing pointed out in the article *Studies on Ancient Chinese History*:

Those people who have been baptized by new historiography and learned the new knowledge about Europe’s high antiquity all take a skeptical attitude toward China’s high antiquity. In recent decades European scholars have conducted deep studies on China and the East. These are scientifically-trained scholars, and in their eyes, our ancient books and ancient Chinese history are full of mistakes, and facts and fictions will certainly look absurd. In 1895, the first volume of *Records of the Grand Historian* translated by Prof. Edouard Chavannes (1865—1918), the best-known French “sinologist,” was published. In the “Introduction,” he pointed out that the legends about model kings such as Yao, Shun and Yu were mostly falsified by later generations; anyone would doubt as to the complete form of this data. He added, “It is particularly weird that the oldest *The Book of Songs* does not record the stories of Yao and Shun.” And later in *The Ancient History of China* (1908), Friedrich Hirth also doubted the legends about Yao and Shun, considering them as the illusions of myth, instead of facts.^②

Yang Kuan, the epitome of skepticism on ancient history, also holds a similar opinion. In *Introduction to the Ancient History of China*, he wrote that French sinologist Edouard Chavannes translated the first volume of *the Book of Songs* and put Yao, Shun and Yu as the characters in the model kings’ legends in the “Introduction,” but he considered it too neat and uniform to be the form of ancient Chinese history. In addition, it was weird that there were no records of Yao and Shun in *the Book of Songs*. Besides Edouard Chavannes, the Western scholar Friedrich Hirth had already considered the legends about Yao and Shun as the illusions of myth in *The Ancient History of China* (1908). Recently Henri Maspero in his book *Légendes Mythologiques dans le Chou King* also examined the evolution of folk tales such as Xi He and the Flood in *Shang Shu* (or *The Book of Documents*). In *Danses et légendes de la Chine ancienne*, M. Marcel Granet deemed Yu as the mythological figure of coppersmith.^③ In one word, the famous Western sinologists such as Edouard Chavannes, Friedrich Hirth, Henri Maspero and M. Marcel Granet all cautiously hold a skeptical attitude toward China’s high antiquity.

Here involves an important question, namely, is the historical skepticism advocated by Hu Shi and Gu Jiegang academically linked to that of the Western world? Based on the available data, it has not yet been clear about whether Hu Shi and his student Gu Jiegang directly read relevant works of Edouard Chavannes, Henri Maspero and M. Marcel Granet before the rise of the “Discussion of Ancient History” movement, but they were probably inspired by the historical skepticism of the Western world.

① Gu, 2011, p. 164.

② Cheng, 1935.

③ Yang, 2005.

Since the promulgation of the new educational system in the late Qing Dynasty, the history textbook issue soon became a tough nut to crack, and then many history textbooks were translated into Chinese. These history textbooks translated into Chinese mainly comprise textbooks of Chinese history and those of Western history. The textbooks of Western history translated and introduced at that time included a book titled Myers' *General History*. The book was originally titled *A General History for Colleges and High Schools*, which was written by Philip Van Ness Myers (1846—1937), interpreted by Huang Zuoting, recorded by Zhang Zaixin and published by the Translation Institute of Shanxi University in 1905. Zhang Zaixin recommended this book in the Preface with: This book not only learns widely from others' strong points in literary form, but also "earns readers' praise for its orthodox comments, carefully selected materials, and beautiful style of writing," deserving to be "concise but not rough, detailed but not redundant." In short, this book was chosen as a good edition among American high school textbooks. Therefore, the famous British missionary Timothy Richard regarded this book as the foremost in laying out the ground plan for Shanxi University, and asked Huang Zuoting to translate it into Chinese for him for use in Chinese schools.^① After publication, this book exerted a certain influence on the education circle. Its Chinese version was republished in the first year of the Republic of China (1912), and the English version was also published at the beginning of the Republic of China.

Myers' *General History* is divided into ancient history, medieval and modern history, in which ancient history comprises three volumes, and begins from the day with the earliest traceable deeds across the world and ends with the fall of the Western Roman empire in 476. The "countries across the world" mentioned above includes China. About China's "day with earliest traceable deeds," the book states, "The Chinese have books that purport to give the history of the different dynasties that have ruled in the land from a vast antiquity; but these records are largely mythical and legendary. Everything is confused and uncertain until we reach the eighth or seventh century before our era." This historical skepticism is basically in line with the argument that "there was no history before the Eastern Zhou Dynasty" as advocated by Hu Shi and Gu Jiegang attracted Li Xiaoqian's attention, but unfortunately did not elicit his further confirmation on the academic link between the historical skepticism and the "Discussion of Ancient History" movement.^②

As mentioned before, this book was adopted by Chinese schools right after its publication. It is noteworthy that in 1906, shortly after the book's publication, Hu Shi who then attended Chengzhong Elementary School bought one copy of the book.^③ Hu Shi then realized that the ordinary world history textbooks with "high antiquity containing farfetched myths and legends" were not "conducive to scholarly research." We can deduce from this that Hu Shi might have taken some cues from Myers' *General History* and later further clearly proposed the notion that, "There was no history before the Eastern Zhou Dynasty."

As seen from the existing data, it is still unclear whether Gu Jiegang read Myers' *General History* before the rise of the "Discussion of Ancient History" movement, but what can be affirmed is that he had come into contact with the historical skepticism of this book indirectly through Xia Zengyou's *The Chinese History: A Textbook* published in 1902. The book states that Chinese history can be divided into three periods. The remote ancient China is from prehistory to the late Zhou Dynasty... The history of doubts is from prehistory

① Zhang, 1905, p. 2.

② Li, 2014, p. 54.

③ Hu, 2003, p.10.

to the early Zhou Dynasty, during which no authentic history was recorded but those written on the classics of various schools.^① This argument is equivalent to the notion that “there was no history before the Eastern Zhou Dynasty” as advocated by Hu Shi and Gu Jiegang, if not literally misinterpreted. It is noteworthy that the translator of Myers’ *General History* has made a clear statement that this book seems obscure to him in describing Chinese literature and religions. His translated version, as modified by Mr. Xia from Qiantang, is quite different from the original text. The “Mr. Xia from Qiantang” refers to Xia Zengyou. This shows that Xia Zengyou’s proposition “no authentic history recorded during the history of doubts” may probably resulted from the enlightenment in the historical skepticism of Myers’ *General History*. It is still worth mentioning here that Gu Jiegang took the lead in accepting Hu Shi’s notion that “there was no history before the Eastern Zhou Dynasty,” which is inseparable from his having accepted Xia Zengyou’s opinions before.^② By this token, even if Gu Jiegang did not read Myers’ *General History* directly, he was enlightened by this book indirectly.

Besides Myers’ *General History* (a “Western historiography”), the Chinese textbooks compiled by other foreigners went even farther in historical skepticism. One of the well-known textbooks is *The Ancient History of China*. Its author is Friedrich Hirth (1845—1927), the previously mentioned German sinologist. In 1870, Friedrich Hirth started working for China’s customs; from 1878 to 1888, he held a post in the Shanghai Bureau of Statistics; from 1886 to 1887, he was assigned as chair of the North-China Branch, the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland. After 25-years’ staying in China, he resigned in 1895 and returned to his country. In 1902, he was appointed by Columbia University (the USA) as the first professor of China studies. *The Ancient History of China* used to be his teaching materials in Columbia University.^③ According to Li Xiaoqian, Friedrich Hirth’s greatest contribution is his courage to question the ancient Chinese history, holding that the history before the Zhou Dynasty is mixed with legends and myths that are not credible. And he indicates that Friedrich Hirth’s historical skepticism originated from James Legge and was deeply influenced by Edouard Chavannes.^④ Therefore, Friedrich Hirth’s *The Ancient History of China* is not only the earliest masterwork on the ancient history of China written by a westerner, but also a work reflecting the complete research results of Western historical skepticism. In addition, Li Xiaoqian gives a systematic introduction to the historical skepticism in Friedrich Hirth’s *The Ancient History of China*, on which no more details are provided herein.^⑤

But it must be noted that there is still room for further exploration. One of the most important points is Friedrich Hirth’s understanding of *Book of Songs*. When speaking of You-wang (the last king of the Western Zhou Dynasty reigning from 781 to 771 BC), Friedrich Hirth quoted the first four stanzas of *At the Conjunction of the Sun and Moon in the Tenth Month, Minor Odes of the Kingdom, Book of Songs*, protesting that this “eclipse of the sun” took place on August 29, 776 B.C.^⑥ “That the eclipse was highly important in calling Heaven itself as a witness in confirming the reliance we may place in this early period of Chinese history, has been pointed out without contradiction, as far as I am concerned, from either Sinologues or astronomers by the Jesuit Father Amiot in his celebrated paper *The Antiquity of the Chinese Proved by Their Monuments*. The coincidence of the two dates proves

① Xia, 2004

② Gu, 2011a, pp. 335–336; Gu, 2011b, pp. 185–186.

③ Liang, 1942.

④ Li, 2014, p. 60–64.

⑤ Li, 2014, p. 60–63.

⑥ This opinion differs from most other western sinologists as represented by James Legge who believe that this “eclipse of the sun” took place in 775 B.C., so it could be deemed as Friedrich Hirth’s an original idea. F. Hirth. (1908). *The ancient history of China*. Columbia University Press.

beyond a doubt that the opinion of Chinese commentators, who described this ode as applying to You-wang on the grounds of circumstantial evidence, must be correct. It is, according to all the Chinese chronological authorities, the sixth year of You-wang's reign; and this is, indeed, as Legge says, "the earliest date in Chinese history about which there can be no dispute."^① Previous dates have been arrived at by computation.^② This opinion completely accords with Hu Shi's words that Book of Songs should be the oldest historical data among ancient Chinese books when he proposed the notion that "there was no history before the Eastern Zhou Dynasty." Hu Shi also bases his argument on the "eclipse of the sun" recorded in *At the Conjunction of the Sun and Moon in the Tenth Month, Minor Odes of the Kingdom, Book of Songs*. Since the "calendarists" and textual researchers of ancient China and the "western scholars in recent years" all presume the date of this "eclipse of the sun" to be August 29, 776 B.C., this cannot be taken as a coincidence but hard scientific evidence.^③ As seen from existing data, the western scholars mentioned here by Hu Shi specifically refer to Friedrich Hirth. Hu Shi once learned from Friedrich Hirth when attending Columbia University. Hu Shi recalled in his later years that Prof. Friedrich Hirth's *The Ancient History of China and China and the Roman Orient* received high attention from the academic circle at that time. But he felt depressed for not having any students—neither major nor minor, so Hu accepted Firth's invitation and took sinology as one of his minor courses.^④ It shall be noted that Friedrich Hirth went to the United States in 1902 at the invitation of Columbia University to teach Chinese history and the history of China-foreign relations, so Hu Shi even in his later years still remembered the two books.

In contrast with Hu Shi, Gu Jiegang was indirectly influenced by Friedrich Hirth's historical skepticism. Li Xiaoqian believed that Friedrich Hirth's *The Ancient History of China* was one of the sources for Hu Shi's historical skepticism and Hu Shi then fostered Gu Jiegang's historical skepticism. Thus, Gu Jiegang's concept of ancient Chinese history was indirectly influenced by Friedrich Hirth.^⑤ This opinion is correct in general, but needs to add the idea that Gu Jiegang was not influenced by Friedrich Hirth's historical skepticism from a single dimension. Although *Ancient History of China* has not been translated into Chinese, it exerts a certain influence on Chinese academic circles. For example, Liu Yizheng has quoted some parts from this book in *History of the Chinese Culture* several times, one of which is Friedrich Hirth quoting French sinologist Edouard Biot's doubt on King Yu's control over the Flood, holding that King Yu with such extraordinary power could not be a human being.^⑥ According to *Gu Jiegang's Diary*, before the publication of *History of the Chinese Culture*, Gu Jiegang had already obtained the manuscript of the book and read it carefully.^⑦ It is still worth mentioning that Gu Jiegang expressed Friedrich Hirth's above opinions in discussing ancient Chinese history. In *A Reply to Mr. Liu and Mr. Hu*, he wrote that if King Yu was a man instead of a god, we shall be frightened by witnessing his achievements.^⑧ It can be learned from the above that Gu Jiegang might have taken cues from this book in forming his doubts about King Yu.

Before the initiation of the "Discussion of Ancient History" movement, Hu Shi and his student Gu Jiegang had come into contact with the historical skepticism of Western sinology through direct academic exchange and

① Hirth, 1955, p. 56.

② Hu Shi. *History of Ancient Chinese Philosophy*. Collected Works of Hu Shi, Vol. 5, p. 215.

③ Hu, 2003.

④ Li, 2014, p. 74.

⑤ Liu, 1932, p. 77.

⑥ Gu, 2011c, pp. 240, 250, 254–255, 260.

⑦ Gu Jiegang. *A reply to Mr. Liu and Mr. Hu*. *Discussion of Ancient History*, Vol. 1, p. 112.

text reading, or indirect text reading, and had been inspired therefrom, more or less. The notion that “there was no history before the Eastern Zhou Dynasty” is one of the representative instances. From this perspective, the rise of the “Discussion of Ancient History” movement bears a close relationship with the historical skepticism of Western sinology.

2. J. G. Andersson’s archaeological conclusions and the “Discussion of Ancient History” movement

As the academic circle points out, it is surely beyond the limits of historical skepticism and prejudiced to say that “there was no history before the Eastern Zhou Dynasty.” Indeed, when Hu Shi proposed this argument, no reliable evidence had ever been found to prove the history of the “Three Emperor Period to the Xia Dynasty,” but oracle bone scripts were available then as “direct historical data” to prove the history of the Shang Dynasty. Therefore, once published, this argument was criticized by scholars at that time such as Lu Maode.^① This criticism has become more and more violent since the 1990s when the ideological trend of “moving from historical skepticism” emerged, pouring sarcasm on the argument to the fullest.^② But the point is that after Hu Shi and Gu Jiegang read Wang Guowei’s *New Evidence for Ancient History* and other writings, their viewpoints on ancient Chinese history shifted immediately, i.e., from “no history before the Eastern Zhou Dynasty” to public acknowledgment of “with the history of the Shang Dynasty.”^③ Thus, the critics who still refused to let go of the notion after that were pointless.

However, it must be pointed out here that, although the viewpoints of Hu Shi and Gu Jiegang on ancient Chinese history underwent the above-mentioned shift, they did not alter their historical skeptic position accordingly, but brought out a new “doubting antiquity” argument, namely, “the Shang Dynasty was still in the late Stone Age.”^④

Similar to the notion that “there was no history before the Eastern Zhou Dynasty,” the “doubting antiquity” argument that “the Shang Dynasty was still in the late Stone Age” is also directly related to Western sinology. The western sinologists include not only Edouard Chavannes, Friedrich Hirth and other sinologists with historical documents as the object for criticism, but also some scholars engaged in archaeological work. The latter went even farther in changing the viewpoints on ancient Chinese history. In 1936, Gu Jiegang pointed out in the Preface to *Investigation of Three Emperors*:

Speaking of the ancient Chinese history system, what instantly occurs to people is nothing but the Three Emperors and Five Sovereigns, followed by the Three Kings and Five Overlords. This is a system that has been built for over two thousand years and deeply implanted in people’s minds. Most people do not see any problem therein; some people know the problems but dare not discuss them for saving from trouble. We have been dreaming for the golden age of the Three Emperors and Five Sovereigns for sixty or seventy generations without causing any trouble...

It is lucky to have a good dream; but unfortunately, such a good dream cannot last any longer in

① Lu Maode. Review of Gu Jiegang’s Discussion of Ancient History. *Discussion of Ancient History*, Vol. 2, p. 269–270.

② Li, 1994, p. 94.

③ Chen, 2008

④ Hu Shi. A letter on Ditian and Nine Tripods. *Discussion of Ancient History*, Vol 1, p. 169.

recent decades since opening to overseas navigation. Western scholars feel unsatisfied with the story of Genesis, so some of them explore geology, and some explore biology, anthropology and sociology, making it completely clear about the origin and evolution of human beings, and revealing to people the real situation of ancient times! What has mostly changed people's viewpoints on ancient history is archeology. Archaeologists have unearthed many underground relics and used the ancients' instruments to prove the culture back then, presenting knock-down arguments. We think of the ancient times as a golden age, but they in turn reveal to us a barbaric one, so the previous impression of ancient times changes immediately.

Under the influence of this concept, in the late Qing Dynasty, some arguments emerged successively. For example, Kang Youwei proposed in *A Study of Confucius as a Reformer* that "the high antiquity is uncultured," and Xia Zengyou in *The Chinese History*, deemed the period from prehistory to the early Zhou Dynasty as a history of doubts.^①

It is a pity that neither of the arguments raised enough attention. According to Gu Jiegang, besides the political factors, "absence of archaeological assistance" is also a reason. The discovery and research of oracle bones from the Yin Ruins in the late Qing Dynasty offers strong support in the first place. Based on oracle bone scripts, the production of the Shang Dynasty only comprises animal husbandry, fishing and hunting; its culture is no more than worship ceremony and divination. The territory is so small and society so simple. Later, the "Yangshao Ruins unearthed by the geological survey presented many painted potteries but no characters or bronze wares. This is a different culture we have never seen in ancient books." Hence, "it is said that the Yin Ruins is in the early Bronze Age, while the Yangshao Culture is in the late Stone Age." Great discoveries have kept coming and have dragged us out of the previous idea of history influenced by Confucianism and Taoism, and made us see the big problems in book records. The records are not only doubtful but no less than faking!^② In this way, with the "archaeological assistance," the "Discussion of Ancient History" movement centered on the "theory of the accumulated creation of Chinese ancient history" was further pushed forward.

Judging from the available data, the excavation of the Yangshao Ruins mentioned above is directly related to the western sinologist J. G. Andersson (1874—1960), a famous Swedish geologist and archaeologist. In May 1914, J. G. Andersson came to China at the invitation of the Beiyang Government and held the post of Mining Management Consultant under the Ministry of Agriculture and Commerce. Between October 1918 and April 1921, J. G. Andersson twice investigated the ancient ruins in Yangshao Village, Henan province, believing it to be ruins "of the Stone Age." To further figure out the significance and cultural characteristics of the ruins, J. G. Andersson intended to conduct a scientific unearthing, and reported to the incumbent Minister of Agriculture and Commerce and Director of Geological Survey. In October 1921, with the official approval from the Chinese Government, J. G. Andersson and other 5 colleagues of the Geological Survey carried out their excavation in Yangshao Village until December 1, and unearthed a total of 17 sites, acquiring a number of precious relics. In 1923, J. G. Andersson's first monograph on Chinese archeology—*An Early Chinese Culture* was published.^③ This book was written in English and initially published in Issue 5 of *Bulletin of the Geological Society of China* with an abridged translation by Yuan Fuli. J. G. Andersson for the first time brought up the name "Yangshao

① Gu Jiegang & Yang Xiangkui. Preface to Investigation of the Three Emperors. *Discussion of Ancient History*, Vol. 7, p. 273.

② Gu Jiegang & Yang Xiangkui. Preface to Investigation of the Three Emperors. *Discussion of Ancient History*, Vol. 7, pp. 273–274.

③ Yan, 1989, pp. 329–330.

Culture” in the book, and preliminarily dwelt on the nature of Yangshao Culture. According to him, in the matter of all discoveries from the Yangshao Ruins, it seemed to be from the end of Neolithic Age.^① This judgment corrected the academic circle’s previous view, i.e., “China did not undergo the Stone Age.” Moreover, J. G. Andersson also proposed the opinion that the “Yangshao Culture originated from the west.” These opinions raised high attention from the academic circle at that time.

J. G. Andersson maintained close contacts with mainstream Chinese scholars. Hu Shi was one of them. Since other scholars have already teased out and investigated the communications between them, no more details will be provided here.^② It is worth mentioning that Hu Shi not only detailed the relics unearthed from Yangshao Village in his diary, but also praised J. G. Andersson’s “precise methods” and “prudent judgment.”^③ As a result, Hu Shi partially accepted J. G. Andersson’s conclusions and used them to promote the ongoing “Doubting Antiquity” movement.

Let us start from Gu Jiegang’s *A Letter Discussing Ancient History with Qian Xuantong*. Gu Jiegang talked about the origin of “Yu” in this article and believed “it is from the Nine Tripods.”^④ Hu Shi did not agree with this argument and wrote to Gu Jiegang on May 30 that in his opinion, the “Nine Tripods” was a myth. Iron was not invented in the Xia Dynasty; bronze was also probably unavailable in that age. J. G. Andersson who discovered the Mianchi Stone Age Culture recently suspected that the Shang Dynasty was still in the late Stone Age (Neolithic Age). He thought his presumption was probably right.^⑤ He further elaborated on his idea for “construction of authentic history.”^⑥ These opinions were basically accepted by Gu Jiegang. In his instant reply to Hu Shi, he wrote that the origin of the Nine Tripods was almost a myth, but one could not say it did not exist. The Nine Tripods is not recorded in *Book of Songs* or *Book of Documents*, so the words like “pulling together all resources of a country to move the Tripods” were certainly not credible. Or they might have been cast in the Zhou Dynasty and placed in the East Capital to make a show of force; the later generations were not sure where they came from and were shocked by their large size, so many stories were made up.”^⑦ He later spoke about “the origin of Yu” again in *A Reply to Mr. Liu and Mr. Hu on Ancient History*, and indicated that about the hypothesis, i.e., “Yu is a kind of animal pictured on the Nine Tripods,” he believed the first half was still correct, but admitted that the second half should be modified.” Therefore, after quoting Hu Shi’s words in the letter, “the Nine Tripods were not cast in the Xia Dynasty,” Gu Jiegang further stated that the sacrificial vessels of Xia were never found, and even those predicated by scholars as the sacrificial vessels from the Shang Dynasty had also not been proved by evidence. Only those with simple sentences and peculiar characters were included in the scope of the Shang Dynasty as compared with vessels of Zhou. Even the verification of Shang vessels was so obscure, it was needless to say that the Xia Dynasty did not enter the Bronze Age, and how could the Nine Tripods have been cast at that time?^⑧ In a word, from the view of Hu Shi and Gu Jiegang, the history of the Shang Dynasty could be testified by the oracle bone scripts, but the Shang Dynasty was “still in the late Stone Age.”

① Andersson, 2011, p. 19.

② Chen, Magnus Fiskesjö, Hu & Andersson, 2005.

③ Hu Shi. Diary (1919 – 1922). *Collected Works of Hu Shi*, Vol. 29, p. 561.

④ Gu Jiegang. *A Letter Discussing Ancient History with Qian Xuantong*. *Discussion of Ancient History*, Vol. 1, p. 78.

⑤ Hu Shi. *A Letter on Ditian and Nine Tripods*. *Discussion of Ancient History*, Vol. 1, p. 169.

⑥ Gu Jiegang. *A Reply to Mr. Liu and Mr. Hu*. *Discussion of Ancient History*, Vol. 1, p. 103–105.

⑦ Gu, 2011

However, such “Doubting Antiquity” opinion was criticized by scholars after publication at that time. In December 1926, in *Review of Gu Jiegang's Discussion of Ancient History*, Lu Maode first quoted Hu Shi's argument that “the Shang Dynasty is still in the late Stone Age,” and expressed his disagreement. He put forward his reason: this argument is derived from a foreigner's assumption, and in fact Andersson in his book *An Early Chinese Culture* did not prove that the stoneware was made in the Shang Dynasty. Henan province is the place where the Shang's capital was located, which is one thing; stone wares were found in Henan, which is another thing. Whether the stone wares are Shang's relics is a third thing and shall not be confused with the other two things.^②

Like Lu Maode, Miao Fenglin also opposed this “Doubting Antiquity” argument held by Hu Shi and Gu Jiegang. In July 1929, Miao Fenglin said humorously in the “Excursus” of *On Ma Heng's Bronze Age of China* that Hu Shi and Gu Jiegang's “judgment of the Shang Dynasty as in the Neolithic Age” resulted from believing in the oracle bone scripts but not the characters engraved with metal tools; “only a question is left open, i.e., whether Mr. Hu is able to fabricate the stone wares inscribed with oracle bone scripts.”^③

Apart from Lu Maode and Miao Fenglin, Guo Moruo was another one disagreeing with this “doubting Antiquity” argument. In 1930, Guo Moruo pointed out in the Appendix to *Research on Ancient Chinese Society* that Hu Shi's main points about the hypothesis of authentic history, though “containing some novel opinions,” “made big mistakes in the use of terminology.” He demonstrated that J. G. Andersson who discovered the periods such as Yangshao Culture and Xindian Culture suspected that the Shang Dynasty was in the late Stone Age, i.e., the late Neolithic Age, but in this dynasty bronze wares were already in use. This period “is archaeologically termed as an age using metal wares and stone wares concurrently.” However, Hu Shi “roughly called it a Stone Age,” and added a note of “Neolithic Age” under the “late Stone Age,” which was completely wrong. Now no one can define the geological ages of China when the scientific unearthing is still at its embryonic stage, but it can be asserted that the Shang Dynasty is in the late Neolithic Age, i.e., the age using metal and stone wares at the same time.^④

Objectively speaking, above scholars' criticisms do make sense. Thus, Hu Shi and Gu Jiegang later revised their understanding on this issue. Gu Jiegang states clearly in the above-mentioned *Preface to Investigation of the Three Emperors* that it is said that the Yin Ruins is in the early Bronze Age, while the Yangshao Culture is in the late Stone Age. But that does not keep Gu Jiegang from having a “Doubting Antiquity” conclusion: The records about the Shang Dynasty in previous books “are not only doubtful but no less than faking!”^⑤

It is worth mentioning here that, Hu Shi and J. G. Andersson are not academically of one mind. For instance, Hu Shi does not agree with J. G. Andersson's opinion that the “Yangshao Culture originates from the west,” but holds that “it is better to adopt a parallel development theory than a mutual effect theory.” This belief is based on the fact that “the former can explain the similar patterns and the same method of using potteries in crop rotation, but after all cannot explain the existence of a cooking tripod with hollow legs unique to China,” but “the latter can explain the accidental similarity by use of finite possibility theory and utilize the unique

① Gu Jiegang. A Reply to Mr. Liu and Mr. Hu on Ancient History. *Discussion of Ancient History*, Vol. 1, pp. 117–118.

② Lu Maode. Review of Gu Jiegang's *Discussion of Ancient History*. *Discussion of Ancient History*, Vol. 2, p. 269.

③ Miao Fenglin. On Ma Heng's *Bronze Age of China*. *Discussion of Ancient History*, Vol. 2, p. 34.

④ Guo, 2000, pp. 290–291.

⑤ Gu Jiegang & Yang Xiangkui. Preface to *Investigation of the Three Emperors*. *Discussion of Ancient History*, Vol. 7, p. 274.

patterns as its evidence.”^① However, the academic disagreement between them shall not affect our judgment, namely, the “Discussion of Ancient History” movement advocated by Hu Shi and Gu Jiegang is indeed “archaeologically assisted” by the western geologists and archaeologist J. G. Andersson to a large extent.

3. Arthur W. Hummel Sr.’s introduction and the “Discussion of Ancient History” movement

In December 1935, Qian Mu pointed out in the preface to the forthcoming *Cui Dongbi Yi Shu* (*Collected Works of Cui Shu*) that, the scholarship of Cui Shu, a learned man in the Qing Dynasty, originally “sunk to the bottom of the sea of books,” but “now shows extraordinary significance.” This shall be mainly attributed to the vigorous promotion by Hu Shi, Qian Xuantong and Gu Jiegang. And among them, the one particularly known for “Doubting Antiquity” is Gu Jiegang who knows well Cui Shu’s historical research methods and makes further progress in scholarship. The *Discussion of Ancient History* formulated by Cui Shu spread like wildfire across the country; his suspecting Yu as an insect was passed from one to another who believed it or not. These three scholars have been adored as a sun or star in the sky or called as fierce floods and savage beasts by people who stand in awe of them. In brief, their names have become widely known to almost all learned people.^② Mr. Qian’s comments are not baseless. The reputation of the *Discussion of Ancient History* was not confined to China but extended to foreign countries.

Western sinologists systematically learned the works related to the “Discussion of Ancient History” not through the *Discussion of Ancient History* published in June 1926, but through a pamphlet entitled *Collected Works on Discussion of Ancient History*. This book was compiled by Cao Juren who was then engaged in compiling a “Series of Chinese Classical Learning.” This book was listed as “Volume III of the Series” and published by Shanghai Liangxi Library. About the compilation of the book, Cao Juren wrote a preface. In this preface, he first expressed his intention to compile this book for printing a “Series of Chinese Classical Learning,” and also regarded it as a continuation of the great cause, the textual research of ancient Chinese history, after *Records of Examining Beliefs*. And to complete the “Chinese Classical Learning,” five stages needed to be experienced, i.e., “discernment of forgeries,” “textual criticism,” “exegetical studies,” “reorganization” and “exploration.” And then he explained the content of *Collected Works on Discussion of Ancient History*, holding that Gu Jiegang’s textual research of ancient Chinese history surpassed his predecessors on two fronts, i.e., “attitude and method of textual research.” Hu Shi’s *Reaction to Discussion of Ancient History* was equally important, since he proposed an issue about “influencing people’s minds” in this article, which could be seen as a symptomatic prescription. Furthermore, Qian Xuantong’s opinion on the *Six Classics* showed his courage.^③ Frankly speaking, this 18-page preface, though not as eloquent as the Preface in Volume I, *Discussion of Ancient History* written later by Gu Jiegang, can yet be regarded as a brief introduction to “Discussion of Ancient History.”

After its publication, *Collected Works on Discussion of Ancient History* attracted attention from the academic circle, and was soon chosen as the history book of the College of Chinese Studies in Beijing.^④

① Hu, 2003, p. 1.

② Qian, 1982, pp.1046–1047.

③ Cao, 1925, pp. 1–18.

④ Gu Jiegang, *Gu Jiegang’s Diary*, Vol. 1, p. 748.

The college hired excellent foreign teachers and administrative staff, most of whom were senior clerics or sinologists, such as William Bacon Pettus, Arthur W. Hummel Sr. and Lucius Chapin Porter.^① The one who oversaw teaching Chinese history was Arthur W. Hummel Sr.. What might be inferred from this is that, as early as before the publication of *Discussion of Ancient History*, Arthur W. Hummel Sr. already noticed “Discussion of Ancient History,”^② so he used *Collected Works on Discussion of Ancient History* as the history book and advertised it to the college students.

This promotion received active responses from the students. On May 11, 1926, *Gu Jiegang's Diary* stated that, “Zhisheng paid a visit, saying that the students of the College of Chinese Studies all read my articles. I was quite eager to meet them... so we made an appointment on Thursday to visit the college together.” It shall be noted here that “Zhisheng” refers to Feng Youlan. Mr. Feng was then working for Pushe Publishing Cooperative Society and doing a part-time teaching job for the College of Chinese Studies. Consequently, the College of Chinese Studies invited Gu Jiegang for a visit through Feng Youlan. On May 20, Gu Jiegang and Feng Youlan kept the appointment and visited the College of Chinese Studies together. During this visit, Gu Jiegang became acquainted with sinologists Arthur W. Hummel Sr. and Lucius Chapin Porter, and promised to deliver a speech on June 1. On that day, Gu Jiegang went to the College of Chinese Studies together with Pan Jiaxun and Feng Youlan, and Gu Jiegang delivered a speech on his thesis which was translated by Lucius Chapin Porter.^③ It was a pity that Gu Jiegang did not minutely record this speech in his diary. If he had, we could have seen how the college students were satisfied with the article. However, this speech calling for “breaking the traditional concept of regional unification,” *The Origin of Qin–Han Unification and Imaginations of the World during the Warring States Period*, was obviously appreciated by Arthur W. Hummel Sr. who translated this article into English on July 12 and read out this “Doubting Antiquity” article in front of the students.^④ In a word, the *Collected Works on Discussion of Ancient History* compiled by Cao Juren won a place in the interactions between Western sinology and “Discussion of Ancient History.”

This issue does not end here. In fact, the publication of *Discussion of Ancient History* (Vol. I) is also directly related to *Collected Works on Discussion of Ancient History*. As early as June 30, 1923, the thought of compiling *Discussion of Ancient History* had already come to Gu Jiegang.^⑤ But due to various reasons, the compilation of the book was not placed on the agenda until Cao Juren's *Collected Works on Discussion of Ancient History* was published in 1925. On this point, Gu Jiegang explained initially in the Preface to *Discussion of Ancient History* (Vol. I):

Last summer, one of the bookstores in Shanghai turned our discussion of ancient Chinese history into a book entitled *Collected Works on Discussion of Ancient History* and published it. My colleagues of the Publishing Cooperative Society blamed me, saying, “Why have you kept delaying the publication and let others get ahead of us?” I certainly felt sorry for the delay, The printed copy of the Shanghai version contains many rough

① Li Xiaoqian. *Sinology outside China and Modern Historiography in China*. pp. 326–327.

② In November 1926, Arthur W. Hummel mentioned *Collected Works on Discussion of Ancient History* in his introduction about *Discussion of Ancient History* Vol. 1.

③ Gu Jiegang. *Gu Jiegang's Diary*. Vol. 1, p. 745, 748, 750, 753.

④ Gu Jiegang. *Gu Jiegang's Diary*. Vol. 1, p. 767.

⑤ Gu Jiegang. *Gu Jiegang's Diary*. Vol. 1, p. 373.

misprints made me displeased, so I promised, “I will finish the compilation right away!”^①

By this token, the publication of *Collected Works on Discussion of Ancient History* was an important factor stimulating Gu Jiegang to start compiling *Discussion of Ancient History* (Vol. I). On June 11, 1926, the first volume of *Discussion of Ancient History* was published and soon became popular around the academic and intellectual circles and was reprinted three times within half a year. At the same time, six articles introducing and reviewing this book were published by the academic circle,^② exerting immeasurably great influence.

Broadly speaking, the first volume of *Discussion of Ancient History* was published successfully mainly thanks to the unique charm of its text, but its compiler Gu Jiegang's marketing strategies shall not be neglected. One of his strategies was extensively distributing books as gifts. What is directly related to this paper is that, Gu Jiegang placed a special emphasis on the relations with foreign scholars and for the first time mailed *Discussion of Ancient History* (Vol. I) to the library and several sinologists of the College of Chinese Studies, one copy for each of them, including Lucius Chapin Porter, Arthur W. Hummel Sr., William Bacon Pettus and Benjamin March.^③

The historical hindsight allows us to see that this strategy was obviously very successful. The presentee of this book, Arthur W. Hummel Sr. published an article in November of the same year to strongly recommend *Discussion of Ancient History* to the Western sinology world, which is the most persuasive evidence. That article is “Ku Shih Pien” (Discussions of Ancient Chinese History), Vol. I, which was written in English and published in the *China Journal of Science and Arts* (Vol. 5, No. 5). Arthur W. Hummel Sr. quoted Hu Shi's opinions in this article, namely, *Discussion of Ancient History* was a revolutionary book, ushering in a new epoch for research of Chinese history. He believed that anyone who understood modern China would have to agree with Hu Shi's judgment. Then Arthur W. Hummel Sr. briefly introduced the origin of *Discussion of Ancient History* and Gu Jiegang's main viewpoints; he further stressed that what made Gu Jiegang's articles so important was not only his conclusions but also the methods for reaching the conclusions, the broad and solid evidence, the courage and independent will to establish a new hypothesis, and the sincere attitude of unhesitatingly abandoning his wrong opinions or those proved to be wrong by his debating opponents. In addition, Arthur W. Hummel Sr. pointed out that the Preface to *Discussion of Ancient History* (Vol. 1) was most worth reading. This Author's Preface is his personal experiences over the past three decades, and the best records of changes in the ideological trends of China over the same period.^④ In this way, Arthur W. Hummel Sr. systematically introduced Gu Jiegang and his *Discussion of Ancient History* (Vol. 1) to the Western sinology circle for the first time.

In addition, Arthur W. Hummel Sr. introduced the “Discussion of Ancient History” movement on a more important occasion, i.e., the American Historical Association. In 1927, due to social turbulence in China, Arthur W. Hummel Sr. resigned from his teaching post in the College of Chinese Studies and served the U.S. Library of Congress. On December 31, 1928, the American Historical Association convened a meeting at Indianapolis

① Gu Jiegang. Preface to *Discussion of Ancient History*, Vol. 1, p. 1.

② In a time sequence, the six articles are Zhou Yutong's Reaction to Gu's *Discussion of Ancient History*, Hu Shi's Introduction to Several New Historical Books, Sun Fuxi's On Volume I of *Discussion of Ancient History*, Wang Boxiang's Reading Confusion Classics of New and Old Scripts and *Discussion of Ancient History*, Arthur W. Hummel's Discussions in Ancient Chinese History, and Lu Maode's Review of Gu Jiegang's *Discussion of Ancient History*, all of which are included in *Discussion of Ancient History* Vol. 2.

③ Gu Jiegang. *Gu Jiegang's Diary*. Vol. 1, p. 800.

④ Arthur W. Hummel. Discussions in Ancient Chinese History, Vol. I, *Discussion of Ancient History* Vol. 2, pp. 263–266.

(capital of Indiana) where Arthur W. Hummel Sr. read a paper entitled “What Chinese Historians are Doing to Their Own History.” In this paper, Arthur W. Hummel Sr. pointed out that “an important phase of the new thought movement in China today was an insistent demand for a scientific re-evaluation of the nation’s cultural heritage.” “One of the chief concerns of the modern historical movement has been to approach even the most ancient documents in the spirit of doubt rather than of belief and so break down every self-imposed barrier to knowledge.” The mentioned “historical movement” refers to the “Discussion of Ancient History” movement featured by “Doubting Antiquity.” The immediate cause of this movement is a “symposium on ancient Chinese history” presided over by Gu Jiegang. This presider, then only 31 years of age, had a “firm grasp of the best traditions of native scholarship” on one hand and “together with what he had learned of Western methods” on the other hand, so he could conduct the symposium in the most rigorous scientific manner. These studies were published in a remarkable book entitled *Discussion of Ancient Chinese History*. Therefore, Arthur W. Hummel Sr. believed, “As an example of the best type of modern historical criticism in China, and as a record of the whole ‘new thought movement’ of the past ten years, it deserves to be put into the English language.”^① This paper was published in *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 34, No. 4 (July 1929). Both the American Historical Association and *The American Historical Review* represent the voice of the whole American mainstream historian circle, so Arthur W. Hummel Sr.’s paper successfully advertised the “Discussion of Ancient History” movement to the American historian circle.

Arthur W. Hummel Sr. spared no effort to introduce *Discussion of Ancient History*. Apart from the above two articles, the translation of the Author’s Preface to *Discussion of Ancient History* (Vol. I) is another perfect example. As mentioned before, the first volume of *Discussion of Ancient History* was published on June 11, 1926. The next day, Gu Jiegang sent a copy to Arthur W. Hummel Sr. as a gift, and the latter, who was still in Beijing, intended to translate the Author’s Preface into English right after reading the book. This idea resulted from the fact that this magnificent piece of Author’s Preface with over 60,000 words was not merely “the biography of a modern Chinese historian,” but also “a critical resume of all the currents of thought that have swept over China in the past thirty years.” In 1927, after returning to the U.S., Arthur W. Hummel Sr. once intended to translate the entire *Discussion of Ancient History* into English and published it in the U.S. To stop Mr. Hummel, Gu Jiegang especially wrote a letter to him and advised him to make an abridged translation of *Discussion of Ancient History* since the fragmentary information collected in the book might not be easy for westerners to understand.^② In 1930, with the support of Dutch sinologist J. J. L. Duyvendak, Arthur W. Hummel Sr. translated the Preface to *Discussion of Ancient History* (Vol. I) into English with the title of “The Autobiography of a Chinese Historian” complete with many footnotes. This paper earned him a Ph.D. degree from the University of Leiden, Netherlands. In 1931, this doctoral thesis was published in the Netherlands as the first book of Sinica Leidensia. This book can be seen as the “major work introducing *Discussion of Ancient History* to the Western sinology circle,” which has been widely quoted and reprinted many times, exerting a great influence on the Western sinology circle.^③

During the rise of the “Discussion of Ancient History” movement, through the introduction by some western sinologists including Arthur W. Hummel Sr., the western sinology circle gradually came to know Gu

① Arthur W. Hummel. What Chinese Historians Are Doing in Their Own History. In Wang Shiyun. (trans). *Discussion of Ancient History*, Vol. 2, pp. 310–316.

② Gu Jiegang. Gu Jiegang’s Diary. Vol. 2, p. 130.

③ Liu, 1986, pp. 289–291.

Jiegang as the author and compiler of *Discussion of Ancient History* (Vol. I) and a Chinese historian engaged in studies of ancient Chinese history. From then on, *Discussion of Ancient History* has won a place in Western sinology circles. To some degree, we may even say that with *Discussion of Ancient History*, Chinese historian circles has made an important step on the hard path of “bringing the center of China studies back to China” (by Chen Yuan).

It shall be further noted here that modern China was in an age when the Western world had the absolute say, and *Discussion of Ancient History* was accepted to a great extent by the Western sinology circle, earning the “Discussion of Ancient History” movement noticeable support from the outside world. It is also worth mentioning that when Arthur W. Hummel Sr. published *Ku Shih Pien (Discussion of Ancient Chinese History)* in the *China Journal of Science and Arts*, the “Discussion of Ancient History” movement was being as much censured as praised, and when Arthur W. Hummel Sr. published *What Chinese Historians are Doing to Their Own History* in *The American Historical Review*, the movement actually reached its “trough,” so this article was immediately translated into Chinese and published in the *Weekly Bulletin of the Institute of Philology and History, National Sun Yat-sen University*. Subsequently, the two articles were also included in *Discussion of Ancient History* (Vol. II). This action can undoubtedly be seen as a specific strategy that Gu Jiegang “borrowed” the Western right of discourse to “advertise” *Discussion of Ancient History*. “Doubting Antiquity” scholars not only drew upon the historical skepticism and archaeological conclusions of Western sinologists, but also promoted the “Discussion of Ancient History” movement by virtue of Western sinologists’ introductions and evaluations.

4. Bernhard Karlgren’s research on *Zuo Zhuan* and the “Discussion of Ancient History” movement

Since the late Qing Dynasty and the early Republic of China, the traditional study of Confucian classics underwent a change and development process featuring “emancipation through returning to the ancients.” This development process is particularly reflected by the evolution from the New Text Confucianism movement to the “Discussion of Ancient History” movement. In August 1930, Gu Jiegang openly admitted in the *Preface to Discussion of Ancient History* (Vol. II) that his work followed a rational line of issues related to Confucian classics of new and old scripts discussed by scholars of the Qing Dynasty for a hundred odd years, that is to say, their current work should go further than that of New Text Confucian scholars of the Qing Dynasty.^① Now that the work shall “go further,” besides the similarities, they shall differ from each other on some points. Just as Qian Mu said, Mr. Gu’s basic ideas and methods about discussion of ancient Chinese history are focused on the experience and evolution of legends, while Kang Youwei and his contemporaries advocated New Text Confucianism, but claimed that it was just a reform under the cover of antiquity by Confucius, and the *Six Classics* were forged by Confucian scholars and subsequently tampered with by Liu Xin and Wang Mang, from which *the Forged Classics of the Wang Mang Period* arose. However, “Mr. Gu’s viewpoints on ancient Chinese history featuring the evolution of legends are of new things and will naturally have some defects and incur questions and critical opinions.” As a result, “Mr. Gu naturally understands the doubting spirit of New Text

① Gu Jiegang, *Preface to Discussion of Ancient History*. Vol. 2, p. 4.

Confucian scholars of the late Qing Dynasty and regards them as bosom friends.” Hence, *Discussion of Ancient History* and *New Text Confucianism*, though standing for two different schools, are generally combined; Mr. Gu also uses the attitude and arguments of New Text Confucianism to support his viewpoints on ancient Chinese history now and then.^① The complicated relationship between *Discussion of Ancient History* and the New Text Confucianism of the late Qing Dynasty revealed here is just the tip of an iceberg.

Frankly speaking, the New Text Confucianism of the late Qing Dynasty did lend a hand to *Discussion of Ancient History*, while incurring heavy criticism. Given the relationship between *Discussion of Ancient History* and New Text Confucianism, some scholars attacked *Discussion of Ancient History* by criticizing New Text Confucianism. One of the most representative examples is Qian Mu’s *Chronological Biography of Liu Xiang and His Son Liu Xin*. Just as Qian Mu said straight out in his later years, this article, though designed to criticize Kang Youwei, actually debated with Gu Jiegang. That is why Fu Sinian, whenever there was a dinner welcoming foreign scholars, always invited Qian Mu as a guest of honor and introduced him to others as the author of *Chronological Biography of Liu Xiang and His Son Liu Xin*, which was enough to crack down on the school of New Text Confucianism and the Doubting Antiquity school at the same time.^②

Chinese and foreign cultures share common ground. A foreign sinologist was also regarded by Fu Sinian as a kindred spirit because the former published an article to criticize Kang Youwei’s *The Forged Classics of the Wang Mang Period* during the rise of the “Discussion of Ancient History” movement. This person is Bernhard Karlgren who was once referred to by Hu Shi as “a modern master of sinology in the Western world.” Bernhard Karlgren (1889—1978) was a Swedish sinologist who “once lived in Taiyuan, Shanxi province between 1910 and 1912 for studying Chinese language, and had a short stay in Shanxi University.” In 1915, he went to France, and studied Chinese characters from the French sinologist Chavannes, thanks to whom he learned a lot and made some progress. In the same year, he was awarded a Doctorate of Literature by Uppsala University. In 1918, he assumed the post of Far Eastern Language and Culture professor for the University of Göteborg and served as its president.^③ Bernhard Karlgren focused his research mainly on Chinese linguistics, and made many special contributions to Chinese phonology, earning his fame as a master epitomizing Chinese linguistics and phonology.^④ From the perspective of the interaction between foreign sinology and modern scholarship in China, Bernhard Karlgren enjoyed a high reputation in Chinese academia. Not only were most of his works on Chinese linguistics and phonology translated into Chinese, but his papers on textual research of Chinese ancient books or antiquities.^⑤ Among these writings, besides *Studies on Chinese Phonology*, *On the Authenticity and Nature of the Tso Chuan* was the one exerting the greatest impact on Chinese academia. This book was published in March 1926 as the 32nd issue of the *Annual Report of the University of Göteborg*. In those days, Bernhard Karlgren maintained close contacts with many Chinese mainstream scholars, so this book quickly spread to China and was then interpreted by Lu Kanru and recorded by Wei Juxian. It was first published in the *Journal of the Institute of Sinology of the National University of Peking*, 1927 (Vol. 1, No. 6-8). In the same

① Qian Mu. Review of Gu Jiegang’s “The Politics and History in the Perspectives of Cyclical Alternations of Five Virtues”. *Discussion of Ancient History* Vol. 5, pp. 358–359.

② Qian, 2005, pp. 145, 161.

③ Wang, 1948.

④ Zhang, 1939.

⑤ Li Xiaoqian. Sinology outside China and Modern Historiography in China. p. 99.

year, the book in Chinese version was published by Xinyue Bookstore. In April 1936, the book was revised and enlarged into *On the Authenticity and Nature of the Tso Chuan and Others*, and published by the Commercial Press.^① *On the Authenticity and Nature of the Tso Chuan* was divided into two parts: Part I is a monograph on the authenticity of *Zuo Zhuan*, refuting Kang Youwei's *The Forged Classics of the Wang Mang Period*, and proving that *Zuo Zhuan* was not Liu Xin's pseudograph but a book before the burning of Confucian books in the Qin Dynasty; Part II is a demonstration showing that *Zuo Zhuan* was not written by scholars of State Lu, because its grammar differs from theirs, but it is indeed a book written before the third century B.C.. Similar to Qian Mu's *Chronological Biography of Liu Xiang and His Son Liu Xin*, this book is nothing short of a debate with Gu Jiegang, and therefore promptly created a big stir in Chinese historian circles.

One of the striking examples is that some scholars at the time participated in the discussion by writing articles and supported viewpoints similar to Bernhard Karlgren's. About these articles, Gu Jiegang made a brief summary in *Contemporary Historiography in China*, which was quoted as follows:

Besides the *Book of Documents*, Chinese and foreign scholars have paid high attention to the completion dates of *Zuo Zhuan* and *Guo Yu* (or *Discourses of the States*), an issue proposed but not addressed by the New Text Confucian scholars of the late Qing Dynasty. Among foreign scholars, Bernhard Karlgren is one who has made a thorough study of this issue. His book *On the Authenticity and Nature of the Tso Chuan* demonstrates in a grammatical way that *Zuo Zhuan* was not compiled by the scholars of State Lu, while *Zuo Zhuan* and *Discourses of the States* were indeed compiled by the scholars using the same dialect but not by one scholar. Furthermore, Derk Bodde wrote an article entitled "*Zuo Zhuan and Discourses of the States*," distinguishing one book from another according to the number of their quotations from *Book of Songs* and frequency of using words like "the Supreme Being" or "the Supreme Ruler of Heaven." Many Chinese scholars have conducted textual research on this issue; for example, Feng Yuanjun, Tong Shuye, Sun Haibo and Yang Xiangkui all made comparative studies of it. Feng's *Differences between Zuo Zhuan and Discourses of the States* (an article attached to his translation *On the Authenticity and Nature of the Tso Chuan*) listed fifteen excerpts from both books describing the same thing but with different expressions and proved that the two books were completely irrelevant according to the use of some conjunctions and prepositions. Sun's *On the Authentication of Discourses of the States* (*Yenching Journal of Chinese Studies* No. 16) also pointed out that the same thing recorded by both books varied from one to another in many details, and believed that Si Maqian once quoted *Zuo Zhuan*, instead of *Discourses of the States* that had not yet been completed at the time. Tong's *Subsequent Notes to Issues Regarding Discourses of the States and Zuo Zhuan* (*Zhejiang Library Journal* Vol. IV, No. 1) acknowledged that *Zuo Zhuan* is not a commentary on *Spring and Autumn Annals*, and contrasts the expressions in *Discourses of the States* with that of the same book recorded in *Basic Annals of Zhou* (*Records of the Grand Historian*), learning that *Discourses of Zheng* and some others were completed before *Records of the Grand Historian*, and it also proved in terms of narration, grammar and ancient Chinese legends that *Zuo Zhuan* and *Discourses of the States* were not derivatives of the same book, while the *Discourse of Qi*, *Discourse of Wu* and *Discourse of Yue* were completed after *Records of the Grand Historian*, Yang's *On the Nature of Zuo Zhuan and its Relationship with Discourses of the States* (*Collected Papers of History Studies of National Academy of Peiping* Issue No. 2) refuted what New Text Confucian scholars of the late Qing Dynasty

① Lu, 1936, pp.1-2.

proposed, holding that *Zuo Zhuan* was indeed a commentary on the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, while *Discourses of the States* and *Zuo Zhuan* were not two sections separated from the same book.^①

Based on this, Li Xiaoqian believed that Bernhard Karlgren's *On the Authenticity and Nature of the Tso Chuan* was widely supported by academia of that time, and the "Doubting Antiquity" momentum came under heavy attack and even became divided internally.^② From today's perspective, such opinions remain to be discussed. The first point worth discussing is that although Bernhard Karlgren's *On the Authenticity and Nature of the Tso Chuan* received scholars' support, it does not mean his arguments are indisputable. Before the publication of the above writings, Hu Shi of the Doubting Antiquity School already questioned Bernhard Karlgren's arguments. On April 17, 1927, Hu Shi wrote an abstract after reading the book and sent it to Gu Jiegang and asked him to forward it to Qian Xuantong in the hope of their making comments after reading and publishing together with this letter for "broad discussion." This letter was later published in the *Weekly of Institute of Philology and History, National Sun Yat-sen University* (Vol. 1, No. 1), entitled "*On the Reliability and Nature of Zuo Zhuan*." However, since Gu Jiegang had resigned from Xiamen University, he did not read it in time. On April 10, Hu Shi again wrote "an outline note as the preface to" the forthcoming *On the Authenticity and Nature of the Tso Chuan*, i.e., *Outline and Criticism of On the Authenticity and Nature of the Tso Chuan*. It is necessary to mention here that Bernhard Karlgren had made such a conclusion in the second part of *On the Authenticity and Nature of the Tso Chuan* that the grammar peculiar to *Zuo Zhuan* was different from any other book in the Zhou, Qin and early Han dynasties. *Discourses of the States* has a grammar closely allied to that of *Zuo Zhuan*, besides which no second book could be so grammatically close to *Zuo Zhuan*. After quoting this conclusion, Hu Shi spoke bluntly that such a result could well support the arguments of the New Text Confucian scholars, who believe that *Discourses of the States* was split and changed by *Zuo Zhuan* and the current version of *Discourses of the States* was just the residual version after the splitting by Liu Xin. And Bernhard Karlgren proved by grammatical comparisons that the two books were quite similar in grammar, which was undoubtedly strong evidence for the New Text Confucian scholars of the late Qing Dynasty.^③ From this we can see the standpoint of Hu Shi.

Inside the Doubting Antiquity School, Qian Xuantong was a supporter of Hu Shi's opinions. As mentioned previously, since Gu Jiegang resigned from Xiamen University, Gu Jiegang and Qian Xuantong did not read the letter from Hu Shi before the publication of *On the Authenticity and Nature of the Tso Chuan*. After the publication, Hu Shi mailed the book to Qian Xuantong and expected the latter to continue Bernhard Karlgren's work by making a precise comparison between *Zuo Zhuan* and *Discourses of the States* to arrive at a final conclusion on this issue. On April 6, 1928, Qian Xuantong, in a letter to Hu Shi, said that he thought that the demonstration in this book (i.e., Bernhard Karlgren's *On the Authenticity and Nature of the Tso Chuan*) was not enough to address this issue. Though *Zuo Zhuan*, may not be the commentary on the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, it must be a historical book written by scholars of the Warring States period. This is an argument not only held by "fake New Text Confucian scholars" like him but also by the real New Text Confucian scholars. The only one not believing in its historical nature was Liao Ping who was an ignorant and presumptuous person

① Gu Jiegang. Contemporary Historiography in China. Gu Jiegang's Collected Papers on Ancient History, Vol. 12, p. 430-431.

② Li, 2014, pp. 101-103.

③ Hu Shi. Abstract of On the Reliability and Nature of Zuo's Comments on. Discussion of Ancient History, Vol. 5, p. 171-182.

expressing valueless opinions. The necessary question now was whether it was a commentary on the *Spring and Autumn Annals*.^① From October 28 to November 16, 1931, Qian Xuantong wrote a 30,000-word preface to the forthcoming *The Forged Classics of the Wang Mang Period*.^② In this preface, Qian Xuantong stressed when speaking of *Zuo Zhuan* that Liu Fenglu did the best job in demonstrating that "*Zuo Zhuan* was not a commentary on the *Spring and Autumn Annals*" and both books are irrelevant. Kang Youwei ran even farther, saying that *Zuo Zhuan* was originally part of *Discourses of the States*, which was an unalterable truth. Like Hu Shi, Qian Xuantong after quoting Bernhard Karlgren's conclusions in *On the Authenticity and Nature of the Tso Chuan* said that this was strong evidence proving that *Zuo Zhuan* and *Discourses of the States* were originally the same book.^③ As a result, Bernhard Karlgren's conclusions in turn became the evidence for Doubting Antiquity School to prove the argument of the New Text Confucian scholars.

Like Qian Xuantong, Gu Jiegang also agreed with Hu Shi's opinions. In June 1930, Gu Jiegang published an article titled "The Politics and History in the Perspectives of Cyclical Alternations of Five Virtues" in the *Journal of Tsinghua University*. In this article, Gu Jiegang quoted Hu Shi's opinions about Bernhard Karlgren's *On the Authenticity and Nature of the Tso Chuan*, and then said that Mr. Bernhard Karlgren was held back by the issues related to Confucian classics of new and old scripts, so the materials selected by him were not specific. However, he proved that *Zuo Zhuan* was completed before the burning of Confucian books, and disagreed that this book was written by Confucian scholars or related to State Lu in any way. This was a breakthrough in traditional records, which could prove the statements of the New Text Confucian scholars.^④

Besides these three scholars of the Doubting Antiquity School, Zhang Xitang of the same school also held similar arguments. In November 1932, Zhang Xitang wrote a preface to *Textual Criticism of Zuo's Commentary on the Spring and Autumn Annals* at the invitation of Gu Jiegang. This preface comprised five parts. In the fifth part, Zhang Xitang pointed out two important issues that merited attention in studies of the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, one of which was the relationship between the *Spring and Autumn Annals* and *Discourses of the States*. According to Zhang Xitang, Bernhard Karlgren shared the same opinion as Kang Youwei, namely, "*Zuo Zhuan* was derived from *Discourses of the States*," because the "former has the closest expressions to the latter."^⑤ Here Bernhard Karlgren's conclusions "descend to" the evidence to prove the New Text Confucian scholars' arguments.

Bernhard Karlgren's *On the Authenticity and Nature of the Tso Chuan* is designed to refute Kang Youwei's *The Forged Classics of the Wang Mang Period*, and to prove that *Zuo Zhuan* was not made up by Liu Xin but completed before the burning of Confucian books in the Qin Dynasty. However, mental fact does not equal historical fact. The conclusions he arrived at to demonstrate this opinion was in turn deemed by scholars of the Doubting Antiquity School such as Hu Shi, Qian Xuantong, Gu Jiegang and Zhang Xitang as new, strong evidence to prove the New Text Confucian scholars' arguments. This probably was an unexpected result for Bernhard Karlgren in any case.

The second point worth discussing is that other members of the Doubting Antiquity School such as Tong Shuye and Yang Xiangkui held an opinion totally different from that of Hu Shi, Qian Xuantong, Gu Jiegang and

① Qian, 1999, pp.120–121.

② Yang, 2014, pp. 828–831.

③ Qian Xuantong. Further Discussion on Confucian Classics of New and Old Scripts. *Discussion of Ancient History*, Vol. 5, p. 40–41.

④ Gu Jiegang. The Politics and History in the Perspectives of Cyclical Alternations of Five Virtues. *Discussion of Ancient History* Vol. 5, pp. 320–322.

⑤ Zhang Xitang. Preface to *Textual Criticism of Zuo's Commentary on the Spring and Autumn Annals*. *Discussion of Ancient History*, Vol. 5, pp. 166–170.

Zhang Xitang in terms of *Zuo Zhuan*; but it is actually this “splitting” inside the Doubting Antiquity School that helps the accomplishments of the “Discussion of Ancient History” movement. To put it simply, the “Discussion of Ancient History” movement resulted from the academic exchanges among the scholars of the Doubting Antiquity School. Here is a relevant instance. As mentioned before, Qian Mu’s *Chronological Biography of Liu Xiang and His Son Liu Xin* produced an equally satisfactory effect with Bernhard Karlgren’s *On the Authenticity and Nature of the Tso Chuan* in cracking down the New Text Confucianism through different approaches. Therefore, Fu Sinian often invited Qian Mu as a guest of honor. But in fact, although the *Chronological Biography of Liu Xiang and His Son Liu Xin* was a kind of debate with Gu Jiegang, it was actually designed to build up a defense line for a secondary attack on the New Text Confucian scholars of the Western Han Dynasty for Gu Jiegang, so that the *Discussion of Ancient History* was pushed further towards the victory.^① Moreover, Qian Mu and Gu Jiegang mentally “stand on the same side and do not differ from each other on major issues.”^② This is absolutely not Qian Mu’s own wishful thinking. In fact, Gu Jiegang also regards Qian Mu as a like-minded “opponent in debate” or “comrade in arms.” On August 6, 1930, Gu Jiegang was straight up with Qian Xuantong in a letter that he was eager to stir up a debate over the issues related to Confucian classics of old and new scripts in the *Yenching Journal of Chinese Studies*, since scholarship cannot see progress unless two groups of people hold different opinions and participate in a long-time struggle. If Qian Mu would come to assume the post of full-time lecturer for the Literature Department of Yenching University in the next half year, they would have an opponent in debate and that issue might be addressed someday.^③ It shall be noted that Qian Mu’s *Chronological Biography of Liu Xiang and His Son Liu Xin* was published in the *Yenching Journal of Chinese Studies* (No. 7) in June, and Gu Jiegang immediately wrote *The Politics and History in the Perspectives of Cyclical Alternations of Five Virtues*. This must be related to what was mentioned in his letter. It is still worth noticing that as he was encouraged by Gu Jiegang, Qian Xuantong wrote a postscript and preface respectively for *Textual Criticism of the Spring and Autumn Annals* and *The Forged Classics of the Wang Mang Period. The first part of Discussion of Ancient History* (Vol. V) is closely related to this move.

Like the “Debate on Confusion Classics of New and Old Scripts” among Gu Jiegang, Qian Xuantong and Qian Mu, the “splitting” inside the Doubting Antiquity School over the relationship between *Zuo Zhuan* and *Discourses of the States* was essentially designed to “hasten the resolution of this issue.” As a matter of fact, the Doubting Antiquity School achieved this object to some extent. After summarizing the arguments of scholars on *Zuo Zhuan* at the time, Gu Jiegang pointed out that no final conclusion had yet been arrived at regarding this issue, but it was without question that *Zuo Zhuan* and *Discourses of the States* were definitely not completed in the Spring and Autumn period.^④ From this perspective, it might be reasonable to say that it was the debate among scholars back then and the “splitting” inside the Doubting Antiquity School that helped address the issue regarding the relationship between *Zuo Zhuan* and *Discourses of the States*, to some extent during the “Discussion of Ancient History” movement. We can therefore tell how the western sinologist Bernhard Karlgren’s *On the Authenticity and Nature of the Tso Chuan* is related to the “Discussion of Ancient History” movement.

① Qian Mu. Review of Gu Jiegang’s *The Politics and History in the Perspectives of Cyclical Alternations of Five Virtues*. *Discussion of Ancient History* Vol. 5, p. 364.

② Qian Mu. *Reminiscences of Parents, Teachers and Friends at the Age of Eighty*, p. 160.

③ Gu Jiegang. *Letters of Gu Jiegang*, Vol. 1, p. 564. Gu Jiegang also points out that he invited Qian Mu to participate in compilation of *Discussion of Ancient History* because of the same reason for which he invited Tang Qixiang to co-found Yu Gong Society. The “comrade in arm” relationship between Gu Jiegang and Qian Mu can be inferred therefrom. *Gu Jiegang. Letters of Gu Jiegang*, Vol. 2, p. 533.

④ Gu Jiegang. *Contemporary Historiography in China. Gu Jiegang’s Collected Papers on Ancient History*, Vol. 12, p. 431.

5. Conclusion

We have basically completed a further discussion of Gu Jiegang's the "Discussion of Ancient History" movement and its relationship with developments in Western sinology. Hu Shi and Gu Jiegang proposed the notion that "there was no history before the Eastern Zhou Dynasty", which was indebted to the historical skepticism of Philip Van Ness Myers and Friedrich Hirth of the same period. The idea that "the Shang Dynasty is still in the late Stone Age" advocated by the two scholars was also directly influenced by J. G. An der sson's *An Early Chinese Culture*. Conversely, Arthur W. Hummel Sr. played a key role in introducing and evaluating the first volume of *Discussion of Ancient History* to Western academia. Paradoxically, while Bernhard Karlgren wrote *On the Authenticity and Nature of the Tso Chuan* to refute Kang Youwei's reinterpretation of Confucian Classics (*The Forged Classics of the Wang Mang Period*), his work however became of value for Chinese scholars to reaffirm the value of New Text Confucianism and advance the "Discussion of Ancient History" movement. If we would like to choose a saying to describe the relationship between them, the Chinese proverb "Stones from other hills may serve to polish jade of this one" may be an appropriate choice.

However, it must be noted that I have no intension of replacing the predecessors' inner logic theory with the edge effect theory. As known to academia, the local academic resources of China are the only key to the rise and development of this movement. Countless evidence can prove this argument. However, the most solid one shall be the participants' experience-based statements. As early as June 1926, Gu Jiegang said bluntly in the *Preface to Discussion of Ancient History* (Vol. I) that his motive to overthrow the traditional historiography of ancient Chinese history was inspired by the baseless records of high antiquity as mentioned in *A Study of Confucius as a Reformer*, and he also listed the scholars inspiring or influencing him such as Yao Jiheng, Cui Shu and Zheng Qiao.^① Twenty years later, as the chief writer, he pointed out in *Contemporary Historiography in China* that the rise of modern studies on ancient Chinese history was attributed to the fact that the "Doubting Antiquity" theories appeared successively, such as Cui Shu's *Records of Examining Beliefs* and the New Text Confucianism of the late Qing Dynasty.^② During his later years when touching upon his compiling *Discussion of Ancient History*, Gu Jiegang no longer emphasized the influence from New Text Confucianism of the late Qing Dynasty, but still remembered to reiterate that the guiding concept of *Discussion of Ancient History* in the long run originated from the thoughts of Yao Jiheng, Cui Shu and Zheng Qiao.^③ In conclusion, speaking of the rise and development of the "Discussion of Ancient History" movement, the local academic resources shall be the real source of power.

Any major change in history results from very complicated factors. In general, such complicated "factors" can be divided into two parts: one from inner logic and the other from the edge effect.^④ Only mutual support and cooperation can enable the effective explanation of any change in history. On this paper's subject alone, the rise and development of the "Discussion of Ancient History" movement is dependent not only on Western sinology as the edge effect but also the local academic resources of the inner logic. In return, it is the dynamic integration of both factors that triggers this far-reaching academic movement and drives Chinese scholarship to transit and transform

① Gu Jiegang. Preface to Discussion of Ancient History, Vol. 1, p. 23–26.

② Gu Jiegang. Contemporary Historiography in China. *Gu Jiegang's Collected Papers on Ancient History*, Vol. 12, p. 427–428.

③ Gu Jiegang. How did I Come to Write and Edit "Critiques of Ancient History"? *Gu Jiegang's Collected Papers on Ancient History*, Vol. 1, p. 159.

④ Yu, 2000, pp.2–3.

from traditional mode to modern mode..

(Translator: Ge Hongquan; Editor: Jia Fengrong)

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