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‘LIBERTY’, ‘DEMOCRACY’, ‘PRESIDENT’:  
THE TRANSLATION AND USAGE OF SOME POLITICAL  
TERMS IN LATE QING CHINA

In this paper, I will investigate into the translation and usage of the three important political terms in late Qing China: ‘liberty’ (or ‘freedom’), ‘democracy’ and ‘president’. A review of the various replicas that were suggested as possible equivalents of these words will shed some light on the way in which the originally foreign notions they represent were received when they were first introduced into Chinese discourse in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

1. LIBERTY

In his *Dictionary of the Chinese Language* (1815–1823) Robert Morrison (1782–1834) paraphrases ‘liberty’ as the ‘principle of self-determination’ which he translates into Chinese as *zizhu zhi li* 自主之理.<sup>1</sup> Walter H. Medhurst (1796–1857) translates ‘liberty’ in his *English and Chinese Dictionary* (1847) by the Chinese terms *zizhu* 自主 (self-determination) and *zizhu zhi li* 自主之理 (principle of self-determination) to which he adds the explanations *ziyou deyi* 自由得意 ‘to feel free and comfortable’ and *renyi shanzhuan* 任意擅專 ‘to be left to one’s own will’.<sup>2</sup> Thus, Medhurst is the first to use the two characters *ziyou* 自由 that were to become the standard translation of the term in connection with the word ‘liberty’. Wilhelm Lobscheid’s (Luo Cunde 羅存德) *English and Chinese Dictionary* (1866–1869) offers the translations *zizhu* 自主 (self-determination), *ziyou* 自由 (unrestrained), *zhiji zhi quan* 治己之權 (right of self-government), *zicao zhi quan* 自操之權 (right of self-organization) and *zizhu zhi li* 自主之理 (principle of self-determination), and also includes a number of more specific

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Robert Morrison. 1815–1823. *Wuche yunfu* 五車韻府. *A Dictionary of the Chinese Language, in Three Parts. Part the first; containing Chinese and English, arranged according to the radicals, part the second, Chinese and English arranged alphabetically, and part the third, English and Chinese.* Macao: Honorable East India Company’s Press.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Walter H. Medhurst (Maidusi 麥都思). 1847. *English and Chinese Dictionary.* Shanghai.

words such as ‘natural liberty’, translated as *rencong xinyi* 任從心意 (being allowed to follow one’s intentions), ‘civil liberty’, translated as *fazhong renxing* 法中任行 (being allowed to act within the law) and ‘political liberty’, translated as *guo zhiji zhi quan* 國治己之權 (the right of a state to govern itself).<sup>3</sup> The *Commercial Press English and Chinese Pronouncing Dictionary* (*Shangwu yinshuguan Hua-Ying yinyun zidian jicheng* 華英音韻字典集成), published in 1902, by and large followed Lobscheid’s explanations.<sup>4</sup>

The word *ziyou* appears early in traditional Chinese texts. In Zheng Xuan’s 鄭玄 (127–200) commentary to the passage “while one may ask for an audience, one may not ask for retreat” in the *Liji* 禮記 (Book of rites), we find the phrase: “To leave or stay is not up to one’s own liking” (*qu zhi bugan ziyou* 去止不敢自由).<sup>5</sup> The *Sanguozhi* 三國志 (Records of the Three States) contains the phrase: “Revenues may not be settled arbitrarily” (*jiedu bude ziyou* 節度不得自由);<sup>6</sup> and a verse in the Han ballad “Kongque dongnan fei” 孔雀東南飛 (South-east the peacock flies) runs: “For a long time I’ve found her infuriating / How dare you try to have your own way?” (*wu yi jiu huaifen, ru qi de ziyou* 吾意久懷忿汝豈得自由).<sup>7</sup> None of these instances of *ziyou* indicates that the term was part of the political or philosophical lexicon. While the various meanings are to some degree related to the modern notion of ‘liberty’, they are by no means identical with it.

In a Chinese-American treaty signed on 28 June 1868, the term *ziyou* appears in the following context:

The Great Qing Empire and Great America both assure that their citizens can travel in both countries. Whether people desire to stay for a long duration and acquire citizenship or travel occasionally is all left to their own convenience and may not be hindered or forbidden. All con-

<sup>3</sup> Wilhelm Lobscheid (Luo Cunde 羅存德). 1866–1869. *Ying-Hua zidian*. 英華字典. *English and Chinese Dictionary, with Punti and Mandarin Pronunciation*. 4 vols. Hong Kong: Daily Press Office.

<sup>4</sup> *Commercial Press English and Chinese Pronouncing Dictionary*. *Shangwu yinshuguan Hua-Ying yinyun zidian jicheng* 華英音韻字典集成. 1902. Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan.

<sup>5</sup> *Liji* 禮記 (Book of rites). 1980. *Shisanjing zhushu* 十三經注疏 (The Thirteen Classics with annotations and notes) ed. Edited by Ruan Yuan 阮元. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, p. 1512.

<sup>6</sup> *Sanguozhi* 三國志 (Records of the Three States). 1985. 3rd edition. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, vol. 5, p. 4.

<sup>7</sup> English translation in Burton Watson (tr. and ed.). 1984. *The Columbia Book of Chinese Poetry*. New York: Columbia University Press, pp. 82–92; 93.

tacts between people from the two countries, be it for travel, trade or permanent residence, are free (*ziyou*) for the benefit of both sides.<sup>8</sup>

This usage of *ziyou* is still not very different from the use in ancient China.

On 23 December 1885, the *North China Daily News* (*Zilin xibao* 子林西報) carried an article in English in which the Chinese characters 自由黨 (*ziyoudang*) were inserted after the term 'liberal party'. In 1887, an article in the *Shenbao* 申報 entitled "Lun xiguo ziyou zhi li xiang'ai zhi qing" 論西國自由之理相愛之情 (On the principles of liberty and mutual love in the West) introduced the ideas and principles of liberty and outlined the understanding of liberty of individuals such as Francis Bacon and others. In this article, the principles of 'liberty' are described in the following way:

What is called 'liberty' in the West, is the fact that the ruler and the people are close and their positions of power are not entirely different; that above and below communicate and their feelings are not hindered [to be articulated and heard]. Whenever an important matter of state emerges, the officials and the gentry must assemble and discuss it; the common people may also participate in public debate. When the ruler says that something shall be carried out but the people are against it, it is not put into practice. When the people all say something should be done and the ruler alone is against it, it will not be carried out. Thus, the so-called matters of state are jointly exercised by the ruler and the common people. Even if a violent ruler is at the helm, he may not arbitrarily violate a single subject. If the subject is guilty, the ruler may not twist the law and be lenient towards him. Since it is commonly known among the people that the law is set by heaven and cannot be appropriated arbitrarily by any ruler, the latter cannot protect a single person for his own benefit. Now, if the common people are just and respect the laws, if they are cautious and full of self-respect, and fear the punishments, then they will never in their lifetimes have to attend a civil law suit at court or meet an official; if they indulge in studies and eat meat in the evenings, if they drive around in carriages, innocently gain riches and indulge in peace and tranquillity, then what harm would there be done even to poor and ordinary people? This is called 'liberty'.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Art. 5 of the "Zhong-Mei xuzeng tiaoyue" 中美續增條約 (Revised and enlarged treaty between China and America), in: *Zhong-wai jiu yuezhang huibian* 中外舊約章匯編 (Collection of old treaties between China and other countries). 1957. 2 vols. Beijing: Sanlian shudian, vol. 1, p. 262.

<sup>9</sup> "Lun xiguo ziyou zhi li, xiang'ai zhi qing" 論西國自由之理相愛之情 (On the principles of liberty and mutual love in the West), *Shenbao*, October 2, 1887.

This is the first substantial explanation of the Western notion of ‘liberty’ in late Qing China. Other early texts introducing the idea, such as the *Zuozhi chuyan* 佐治芻言, a translation of Chambers’ *Homely words to aid the government* completed by John Fryer (Fu Lanya 傅蘭雅, 1839–1928) and Ying Zuxi 應祖錫 in 1885<sup>10</sup>, or the *Xinzheng zhenquan* 新政真詮 (True interpretation of the new policy), a collection of essays by He Qi 何啟 (1858–1914) and Hu Liyuan 胡禮垣 (1855–1916) written during the 1890s, do not use the term *ziyou* but employ the expression *zizhu zhi quan* (right of self-determination).<sup>11</sup>

In his *Lun shibian zhi ji* 論世變之亟 (On the speed of world change), published in 1895, Yan Fu 嚴復 (1853–1921) emphasizes the importance of the principles of liberty for Western societies. According to him, the presence or absence of ‘liberty’ is the most fundamental difference between China and the West:

In fact, all the sages in ancient Chinese history were afraid of the theory of liberty and therefore never established it as a doctrine. But the Westerners say that because heaven alone produces man and gives birth to all equally, all people are granted liberty in the same way. For this reason, all people and all states enjoy liberty, the only restriction being that they do not harm each other. Those who violate the liberty of others are considered as violating the principles of heaven and betraying the proper conduct of man. To kill or hurt somebody or to steal someone else’s property are extreme cases of violating the liberty of others. Therefore, not even the ruler of a country may violate the liberty of a single person; and laws and punishments were established in order to ensure this.<sup>12</sup>

Between May 1900 and January 1902, the *Wanguo gongbao* 萬國公報 (*Wan Kwoh Kung Pao. A Review of the Times*) serialized a translation of Herbert Spencer’s treatise *On Liberty* as “Ziyou pian” 自由篇<sup>13</sup>; in

<sup>10</sup> John Fryer (Fu Lanya 傅蘭雅) and Ying Zuxi 應祖錫 (trs.). 1885. *Zuozhi chuyan* 佐治芻言 (Homely words to aid the government). Shanghai: Jiangnan zhizaoju.

<sup>11</sup> He Qi 何啟 and Hu Liyuan 胡禮垣. 1994. *Xinzheng zhenquan: He Qi Hu Liyuan ji* 新政真詮：何啟胡禮垣集 (True interpretation of the new policy: The essays of He Qi and Hu Liyuan). Edited by Zheng Dahua 鄭大華. Shenyang: Liaoning renmin chubanshe (*Zhongguo qimeng sixiang wenku* 9).

<sup>12</sup> Yan Fu 嚴復. 1986 [1895]. “Lun shibian zhi ji” 論世變之亟 (On the speed of world change), in: id. *Yan Fu ji* 嚴復集 (The works of Yan Fu). Edited by Wang Shi. 王 棨. 5 vols. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, vol. 1, p. 3.

<sup>13</sup> Herbert Spencer (Shibensi 施本思). 1900–1902. “Ziyou pian” 自由篇 (On liberty). Translated by W. E. Macklin (Ma Lin 馬林). *Wanguo gongbao* N.S. 12.4–13.3 (136–147); 13.5–6 (149–150); 13.8–9 (152–153); 13.11–12 (155–156).

1903, Yan Fu translated and published John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty* as *Qunji quanjie lun* 群己權界論 (On the boundaries of the rights of society and the rights of the individual)<sup>14</sup>; and in the same year Ma Junwu 馬君武 (1881–1940) rendered the same book as *Ziyou yuanli* 自由原理 (Principles of liberty).<sup>15</sup> Thus, ideas on liberty were eventually introduced into China in a rather comprehensive manner.

## 2. DEMOCRACY

Robert Morrison states in his dictionary that democracy “is improper, since it is improper to be without a leader”, and he paraphrases this statement in Chinese as *ji buke wuren tongshuai yi buke duoren luanguan* 既不可無人統率亦不可多人亂管 (if it is improper that nobody leads, it is equally improper that a multitude of people govern disorderly).<sup>16</sup> There was apparently no single term in the Chinese lexicon to translate the word ‘democracy’ so that Morrison had to express his (unfavourable) view of the concept in a full sentence. In Medhurst's *English and Chinese Dictionary* ‘democracy’ is explained in Chinese as *zhongren de guotong* 眾人的國統 (administration of the state by the multitude), *zhongren de zhili* 眾人的治理 (rule of the multitude), *duoren luanguan* 多人亂管 (disorderly administration by many) and *xiaomin nongquan* 小民弄權 (abuse of power by the mean). In addition, we find an English explanation of the term as ‘government by the rabble’. Obviously, all these explanations still have negative connotations.<sup>17</sup> Lobscheid offers the translation *minzheng* 民政 (government by the people) and adds the Chinese explanations *zhongren guanxia* 眾人管轄 (administration by the multitude) and *baixing nongquan* 百姓弄權 (abuse of power by the common people).<sup>18</sup> The connotations of the explanations in the *Commercial Press Dictionary* of 1902 differ somewhat from Lobscheid's: alongside *minzheng* 民政 (government by the people), we find *baixing caoquan* 百姓操權 (control of state affairs by the common people) and *minzhu zhi guozheng*

<sup>14</sup> Yan Fu 嚴復 (tr.). 1903. *Qunji quanjie lun* 群己權界論 (On the boundaries of the rights of society and the rights of the individual). Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan.

<sup>15</sup> Ma Junwu 馬君武 (tr.). 1903. *Ziyou yuanli* 自由原理 (Principles of liberty). n.p.: Shaonian Zhongguo xuehui.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Morrison 1815–1823.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Medhurst 1847.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Lobscheid 1866–1869.

民主之國政 (government by the people). Since ‘abuse of power’ (*nongquan* 弄權) is replaced here by ‘control of state affairs’ (*caoquan* 操權), we can eventually detect the emergence of an at least neutral view of the concept ‘democracy’.<sup>19</sup>

In Chinese, the original meaning of the word *minzhu*, which is used for ‘democracy’ today, is ‘lord of the people’ (*min zhi zhu* 民之主). The *Shangshu* 尚書 (Book of documents) says: “Once he superseded Xia, he became the lord of the people” (*Jian dai Xia zuo minzhu* 簡代夏作民主),<sup>20</sup> and the *Zuozhuan* 左傳 contains the passage: “His language was irrelevant, not becoming for a lord of the people” (*qi yu tou busi minzhu* 其語偷不似民主).<sup>21</sup> In the late Qing the term came to be used as a translation for ‘democracy’ or to denote a democratic political system. In his famous translation of Wheaton’s *Elements of International Law* (*Wanguo gongfa* 萬國公法), published in 1864, W. A. P. Martin (Ding Weiliang 丁韞良, 1827–1916) frequently employs the term *minzhu* in the latter sense. For instance, he writes:

The great policy of the United States of America is to safeguard that all [federal] states will remain democratic forever (*bao gebang yonggui minzhu* 保個邦永歸民主) and that no outside enemy will invade the country. ... If the country is democratic (*ruo minzhu zhi guo* 若民主之國), the rulers and the officials are freely elected by the population in accordance with the national laws.<sup>22</sup>

or:

In democratic countries (*minzhu zhi guo* 民主之國), the duty to send out and receive envoys is sometimes exercised by the leader, sometimes by the national assembly, and sometimes it is jointly carried out by the leader and the national assembly.<sup>23</sup>

From this time onwards, Chinese officials who were sent abroad generally used the term when writing about democratic political systems.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. *Commercial Press English and Chinese Pronouncing Dictionary* 1902.

<sup>20</sup> *Shangshu* 5.18. Cf. James Legge. 1994. *The Chinese Classics: With a translation, critical and exegetical notes, prolegomena, and copious indexes*. Taipei: Southern Materials Center, vol. 1, p. 498.

<sup>21</sup> *Zuozhuan*, Duke Xiang 31.1. Cf. James Legge. 1985. *The Chinese Classics: With a translation, critical and exegetical notes, prolegomena, and copious indexes*. Taipei: Southern Materials Center, vol. 5, p. 563.

<sup>22</sup> W. A. P. Martin (Ding Weiliang 丁韞良) et al. (trs.). 1864. *Wanguo gongfa* 萬國公法 (Elements of international law). Beijing: Chongshiguan, 2.13.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.11.

Guo Songtao 郭嵩燾 (1818–1891), for example, often employed the word in his diaries written in the 1870s:

Liu Yunshen said: This system is very good indeed! In a country that is not democratic, conditions are unfavourable. The reason for the longevity of the Western countries is that the ruler and the people jointly control the policies of the government.<sup>24</sup>

and again:

The countries founded in the West can be divided into monarchies and democracies. The duties and powers, however, are in like manner exercised and controlled by parliament. For this reason public sentiment is regarded as important.<sup>25</sup>

In his *Riben guozhi* 日本國志 (Treatise on Japan), Huang Zunxian 黃遵憲 (1848–1905) states that all countries in the world are either governed by “a system of one-man-rulership, which is called ‘monarchy’ (*junzhu* 君主), a system where the multitude discuss politics, which is called ‘democracy’ (*minzhu*), or a system where the authorities and the multitude share duties and power, which is called ‘constitutional monarchy’ (*junmin gongzhu* 君民共主)”<sup>26</sup> In this passage, *minzhu* implies ‘rulership by the people’ (*min wei zhu* 民為主).

Sometimes, however, *minzhu* was still used to refer to the ‘lord of the people’ (*min zhi zhu* 民之主), now in the sense of ‘head of a democratic state’. The term frequently appears as such in the *Wanguo gongbao* (*Chinese Globe Magazine*), e.g., in a report on the American presidential elections of 1874: “A new man has assumed rulership in America ...” (*Meiguo minzhu yi ren* 美國民主易人); “... the elections of the lord of the people ...” (*xuanju minzhu* 選舉民主); “In America the lord of the people is called ‘president’ (*Meiguo minzhu yue bolixi-tiande* 美國民主曰伯理璽天德)”<sup>27</sup> And when the *Wanguo gongbao* reproduced a picture of George Washington in November 1890, the subheading read “A picture of Washington, founder of Great America

<sup>24</sup> Guo Songtao 郭嵩燾 . 1982. *Guo Songtao riji* 郭嵩燾日記 (Guo Songtao’s diaries). Changsha: Hunan renmin chubanshe (*Zouxiang shijie congshu* 走向世界叢書 . *From East to West—Chinese Travellers before 1911*), p. 179.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 535.

<sup>26</sup> Huang Zunxian 黃遵憲 . 1890. “Guotong zhi” 國統志 (Treatise on national government), in: id. *Riben guozhi* 日本國志 (Treatise on Japan). Guangzhou: Fuwenzhai, 1.1.

<sup>27</sup> “Xuanju minzhu” 選舉民主 (Presidential elections), *Wanguo gongbao* 7 (316) (December 19, 1874), p. 219b.

and lord of the people (*Da Mei kaiguo minzhu* 大美開國民主).<sup>28</sup> In all these instances, *minzhu* is morphologically identical with the ‘lord of the people’ in ancient Chinese, but there is a semantic difference because the term now simultaneously implies the principle of ‘rulership by the people’. This new usage of the ancient word *minzhu* is an ingenious application of the flexibility of the Chinese language in creating new words.

### 3. PRESIDENT

In Morrison’s *Dictionary* ‘president’ is translated as *zhang* 長 (senior) and *toumu* 頭目 (leader [of a gang etc.]).<sup>29</sup> Medhurst’s *English and Chinese Dictionary* offers the translations *jiandu* 監督 (inspector), *toumu* (leader), *shangshu* 尚書 (president of one of the six boards or ministries), *zhengtang* 正堂 (magistrate or prefect), *tianqing* 天卿 (minister or president of the board of appointments) and *diquing* 地卿 (minister or president of the board of revenue).<sup>30</sup> In addition to these terms, which are mostly derived from the Chinese bureaucratic tradition, we find ‘the President of the United States’ translated as *Huaqi hebu daxuan* 華旗合部大選 (appointed leader of the United Banner States)<sup>31</sup> in Lobscheid’s *English and Chinese Dictionary*.<sup>32</sup> The *Commercial Press Dictionary* of 1902 renders the same English expression as *Meiguo zongtong* 美國總統, i.e. by the term that is still in use today.<sup>33</sup>

The presidential system of democratic countries was unfamiliar to the Chinese and therefore a large number of different renderings and designations for the word ‘president’ were suggested during the nineteenth century:

<sup>28</sup> Cf. *Wanguo gongbao* N.S. 2 (22) (November 1890).

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Morrison 1815–1823.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Medhurst 1847.

<sup>31</sup> The term *daxuan* 大選, here apparently used in the sense of ‘appointed leader’, may also be derived from Qing bureaucratic usage. There it refers to the process of appointing metropolitan and provincial graduates which was deliberated by the board of personnel in even months.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Lobscheid 1866–1869.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. *Commercial Press English and Chinese Pronouncing Dictionary* 1902.

(1) *Touren* 頭人 (leader). When Jiang Youxian 蔣攸銛 (1766–1830), Governor-general of Guangdong and Guangxi, reported to the court on the problem of American ships smuggling opium into China in 1817, he wrote:

In fact, the said barbarians do not have a king. There is only a leader (*touren*). This is one of a number of persons publicly elected by the tribes. Drawing lots they serve in turns and change their position every four years. In respect to commercial affairs, each person is allowed to invest his private capital and carry on [trade] on his own. There is no leader (*touren*) who manages or deputizes them.<sup>34</sup>

(2) *Zongli* 總理 (superintendent). In his *Dili biantong lüezhuan* 地理便童略傳 (Geography for children), written in 1819, Walter Medhurst calls the American head of state a ‘superintendent’:

Question 69: What is the court of America like? Answer: The court of America resembles the court of England. Both have two assemblies which administer law, taxes etc. But America has no king; there is only a person called ‘superintendent’ who carries out government affairs for four years, thereafter he is superseded by another person.<sup>35</sup>

(3) *Guozhu* 國主 (lord of the state). Karl Friedrich August Gützlaff (Guo Shila 郭實臘, 1803–1851) refers to the American leader as ‘lord of the state’ in his “Yamolijia lieguo zhi shi” 亞墨理駕列國之史 (History of the United States of America):

When the people were no longer willing to subject themselves to tyrannical government, they selected the most respected among them to take care of the national policies in public assemblies, and with superior force they expelled the English army. ... The ‘lord of the state’ is elected by the people. After three or six years [another person] takes over the supreme command. All provinces establish assemblies, and the most respected men from among these public assemblies come

<sup>34</sup> “Liang Guang zongdu Jiang Youxian zoubao Mei yapian chuan bei qiang xian liangyu shangxu bing xiao yu jin yapian” 兩廣總督蔣攸銛奏報美鴉片船被搶先兩予賞恤並曉諭禁鴉片 (Jiang Youxian, Governor-general of Guangdong and Guangxi memorializes on the seizure of an American opium-ship, the compensations paid twice and the proclamation to prohibit opium), in: *Yapian zhanzheng dang'an shiliao* 鴉片戰爭檔案史料 (Archival material on the Opium War). 1987. Edited by Zhongguo diyi lishi dang'anguan 中國第一歷史檔案館. Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, vol. 1, p. 20.

<sup>35</sup> Walter H. Medhurst (Maidusi 麥都思). 1819. *Dili biantong lüezhuan* 地理便童略傳 (Geographical catechism). Malacca, p. 17.

together in the grand national assembly in order to discuss the proper conduct of national affairs.<sup>36</sup>

(4) *Qiu* 酋 (chief), *qiuzhang* 酋長 (chief of a tribe), *daqiu* 大酋 (great chief). In his *Yingjiliguoyiqingjilue* 英吉利國夷情記略 (Brief record of the situation of the barbarians in England), a text written prior to the Opium War, Ye Zhongjin 葉鍾進 says that the Americans “appoint twelve chiefs of tribes (*qiuzhang*) who manage national affairs; when one chief dies, another one is elected by the public”.<sup>37</sup> Likewise, Wei Yuan 魏源 (1794–1856) calls the American president a ‘great chief’ in his *Haiguo tuzhi* 海國圖志 (Illustrated treatise on the maritime countries):

In America, the whole country publicly elects one great chief (*daqiu*) to govern the nation. Not only is there no dynastic succession; after four years he is substituted [by another person].<sup>38</sup>

(5) *Bangzhang* 邦長 (leader of the country). In 1860, Hong Rengan 洪仁玕 (1822–1864) wrote in his *Zizheng xinpian* 資政新篇 (New treatise on government) that in America:

... the leader of the country serves one term of five years and receives a restricted allowance. When this period is over, he retires and lives a life free of sorrow. The provinces then select [a new leader].<sup>39</sup>

(6) *Tongling* 統領 (commander), *zong tongling* 總統領 (general commander), *da tongling* 大統領 (great commander), *zongtong* 總統 (commander-general). From the period prior to the Opium War until the 1870s, these related designations were in frequent use. In his *Meilige heshengguo zhilue* 美理哥合省國志略 (Brief account of the United States of America), published in 1838, Elijah Coleman Bridgman (Bi Zhiwen 裨治文, 1801–1861) calls the American leader ‘com-

<sup>36</sup> Karl Friedrich August Gützlaff (Guo Shila 郭實臘). 1838. “Yamolijia lieguo zhi shi” 亞墨理駕列國之史 (History of the United States of America), in: *Gujin wanguo gangjian* 古今萬國綱鑑 (Chronological account of the past and present of the various nations). Singapore: Xianxia shuyuan, 12.93.

<sup>37</sup> Ye Zhongjin 葉鍾進. 1834. *Yingjiliguoyiqingjilue* 英吉利國夷情記略 (Brief record of the situation of the barbarians in England). Quoted from Wei Yuan 魏源 (ed.). 1852. *Haiguo tuzhi* 海國圖志 (Illustrated treatise on the maritime countries). 100 *juan*. Yangzhou: Guweitang, 52.9.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Hong Rengan 洪仁玕. 1860. *Zizheng xinpian* 資政新篇 (New treatise on government). Quoted in Xiong Yuezhi 熊月之. 1986. *Zhongguo jindai minzhu sixiangshi* 中國近代民主思想史 (A history of democratic thinking in modern China). Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, p. 88.

mandar' (*tongling*).<sup>40</sup> This usage was adopted by Liang Tingnan 梁廷柅 (1796–1861) in his “Heshengguo shuo” 合省國說 (Treatise on the United States) of 1844: “The whole country establishes a ‘commander’ and a ‘vice commander’ to assist him.”<sup>41</sup> And Xu Jiyu 徐繼畲 (1795–1873) writes in his *Yinghuan zhilüe* 瀛環志略 (Short treatise of the maritime circuit), published in 1844:

From among the 26 ordinary commanders in America one general commander is chosen. He lives in the capital and acts alone as the ruler of the federation and commander of military affairs. All ministries obey his orders. He is elected in the same way as the commanders of the provinces, and his tenure also ends after four years. Should he occupy the office once again, [his tenure] ends after eight years.<sup>42</sup>

In his *Jiaobinlu kangyi* 校邠廬抗議 (Protest notes from the *Jiaobin*-Studio), Feng Guifen 馮桂芬 (1809–1874) states: “In America the country is ruled by a general commander. This office is transferred to the capable; it is not hereditary.”<sup>43</sup>

In Wang Tao's 王韜 (1828–1897) *Wengyou yutan* 翁牖余談 (Gossip from a poor man's window), the American president is also called ‘great commander’:

The quality of the American constitution is not equalled by any other foreign country. The so called great commander of the country receives an allowance of 25,000 Yuan per year.<sup>44</sup>

Already in the 1870s, newspapers frequently used the term *zongtong*, which was to become the standard term in modern Chinese, to refer to a ‘president’. For example, the *Shenbao* editorial “Lun Taixi guo shi” 論泰西國勢 (On the conditions in Western countries) of 12 January 1878 employs the term *zongtong* several times. It is stated, for example, that Washington institutionalized the election procedures and

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Elijah Coleman Bridgman (Bi Zhiwen 裨治文). 1838. *Meilige heshengguo zhilüe* 美理哥合省國志略 (Brief account of the United States of America). Singapore: Jianxia shuyuan, *passim*.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Liang Tingnan 梁廷柅. 1993 [1844]. “Heshengguo shuo” 合省國說 (Treatise on the United States), in: *Haiguo sishuo* 海國四說 (Four treatises on foreign countries). Beijing: Zhonghua shuju.

<sup>42</sup> Xu Jiyu 徐繼畲. 1986 [1848]. *Yinghuan zhilüe* 瀛環志略 (Brief account of the maritime circuit). 3 vols. Taipei: Taiwan wenhai chubanshe, vol. 2, p. 209.

<sup>43</sup> Quoted from Xiong Yuezhi 1986, p. 91.

<sup>44</sup> Wang Tao 王韜. 1992. “Huaqi shanfa” 華旗善法 (Good methods in America), in: id. *Wengyou yutan* 翁牖余談 (Gossip from a poor man's window). Shanghai: Shanghai wenyi chubanshe, p. 45.

“designed the task of the president (*zongtong*) solely in accordance with the wishes of the people”.<sup>45</sup>

*Zongtong* is an old Chinese word with two meanings. The first is the verbal meaning of ‘to manage’ or to ‘control’ (*zongguan* 總管 or *zonglan* 總攬). In the “Baiguan gongqing biao” 百官公卿表 (Table of the hundred officials and nobles) in the *Hanshu* 漢書 we find the following passage:

The grand preceptor (*taishi* 太師), the grand mentor (*taifu* 太傅) and the grand guardian (*taibao* 太保) are three dukes who serve the Son of Heaven as assistants. They deliberate on the policies and there is nothing which is not jointly managed (*zongtong*) by them. Therefore, there is no single name for this position.<sup>46</sup>

The second meaning is derived from the military realm and denotes the commander-general of a brigade. The modern meaning of *zongtong* is obviously derived from both these ancient meanings; it is a transformation of a verb into a noun and an abbreviation of ‘commander-general’ (*zong tongling* 總統領).

Some Westerners had strong reservations about the translation of president as *shouling* 首領 (leader, chief eunuch). In 1879, a foreigner residing in Shanghai stated in a letter to the editor of the most well-known English newspaper, the *North China Daily News*, that in Chinese *shouling* implied at best the captain of a gunboat but more commonly referred to the head of a gang of robbers, and that it had been a Western or, more precisely, an American missionary who had first used the term *shouling* as a translation for ‘president’, a suggestion which he considered as ridiculous and contemptible.<sup>47</sup> Since it is not clear to whom exactly this writer relates, we can only assume that he referred to E. C. Bridgman who had employed the term ‘commander’

<sup>45</sup> “Lun Taixi guo shi” 論泰西國勢 (On the conditions in Western countries), *Shenbao*, January 12, 1878.

<sup>46</sup> Ban Gu 班固. 1964. *Hanshu* 漢書 (The Book of the Han). 12 vols. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, p. 722.

<sup>47</sup> “To the editor of the North China Daily News”, *North China Daily News*, March 22, 1879: “For some of the worst blunders, however, in making our authorities contemptible and ridiculous in the eyes of the Chinese, foreigners themselves, principally Missionaries, are to blame. Nothing, for example, can be worse than the term *Shouling* for President, which invented by American Missionaries is now in common use for the President of the United States’ people. Taking its very best meaning, it is only a captain of a gunboat, and in its ordinary signification it means the head of a gang of desperadoes.” I am grateful to Rudolf G. Wagner for drawing my attention to this article.

(*tongling*) as the designation for the American head of state in his above mentioned *Brief description of America*.

(7) *Huangdi* 皇帝 (emperor), *guojun* 國君 (monarch), *guohuang* 國皇 (emperor of the state). These terms were frequently used in the *Jiaohui xinbao* 教會新報 (*Church News*) and the *Wanguo gongbao* during the 1860s and 1870s, e.g. in phrases such as “The American emperor (*huangdi*) transfers his office to a capable man, not to his son”; “Lord Hayes who had abdicated the throne has passed away”; “The American rulers (*junzhu*) change their office after four years; they are all equally respected by the multitude of the people”;<sup>48</sup> “At present, the American emperor (*Mei huang* 美皇) is Grant. This is his second term in continuation of [his first] four years in office.”<sup>49</sup>

(8) *Minzhu* (lord of the people), see above.

(9) *Boleges* 伯勒格斯, *bolixidun* 伯理喜頓, *bolixitiande* 伯理璽天德. In the Treaty of Wangxia 望夏條約, concluded between China and the United States in 1844, we already find passages such as “The *bolixitiande* of the United States of America sends a plenipotentiary.”<sup>50</sup> In the 1850s, Jiang Dunfu 蔣敦復 (1801–1867), who assisted William Muirhead (1822–1900) in translating Western books, wrote:

The citizens elect one person to rule the multitude as *boleges* (which denotes the combined rulership of the ruler and the people). From among all presidents one person is selected as the great president who decides all matters of national importance as well as military affairs.<sup>51</sup>

Slightly later, Zhi Gang 志剛 who was sent to America and Europe in 1868 notes:

On the 16th, the humble envoy and others paid visit to the *bolixidun* ... I then presented the letter of credence to the president who received it in person.<sup>52</sup>

<sup>48</sup> Cf. *Jiaohui xinbao* 2 (1869–1870), pp. 171a–74b, and *passim*.

<sup>49</sup> “Da Meiguo shi” 大美國事 (News from America), *Wanguo gongbao* 7 (316) (December 19, 1874), p. 219b.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. Elijah C. Bridgman (tr.). 1845. “Treaty of Wanghia translated from the Chinese”, *Chinese Repository* 14, p. 30.

<sup>51</sup> Jiang Dunfu 蔣敦復. 1871. “Huashengdun zhuan” 華盛頓傳 (A biography of Washington), in: id. *Xiaogutang wenji* 嘯古堂文集 (Collected works from the Xiaogu-Hall), n.p., 5.6–7.

<sup>52</sup> Zhi Gang 志剛. 1981. *Chushi Taixi ji* 出使泰西記 (My first mission to the West). Changsha: Hunan renmin chubanshe (*Zou xiang shijie congshu* 走向世界叢書. *From East to West—Chinese Travellers before 1911*), p. 21.

In the *Elements of International Law* translated by W. A. P. Martin in 1864 we read:

The one person who has the sovereign right to manage all affairs is the leader of all [federal] states, he is the one who exercises control. In the American language he is called *bolixitiande*.<sup>53</sup>

Guo Songtao, who was sent to Europe, and Li Gui 李圭 (1842–1903), who visited an exhibition in America, also employed the term *bolixitiande* for the presidents of democratic countries.<sup>54</sup>

Among these three transcriptions *bolixitiande* is used most frequently, probably due to the fact that *bolegesi* and *bolixidun* are transliterations and the characters employed have no relation to the notion ‘leader of a state’. In contrast, *bolixitiande* could evoke the association of ‘he who holds the imperial seal is a man of virtue’, and this could be read as an allusion to the Son of Heaven in China. In the reports of Chinese envoys sent abroad during the nineteenth century, the two words *zong tongling* (general commander) and *bolixitiande* (president) are often used alongside each other: in more formal situations they would employ *bolixitiande*, but generally *zong tongling* is used. Li Shuchang 黎庶昌 (1837–1897), who was sent to France in 1879, refers to the French president as *bolixitiande* or *zongtong* and thus uses both words interchangeably.<sup>55</sup> In 1889, Cui Guoyin 崔國因 (died 1894), who was sent to America, calls the American president *zongtong*.<sup>56</sup> Xue Fucheng 薛福成 (1838–1894), sent to Europe in 1890, addressed the French president when he presented his letter of credence in the following way: “The Emperor of the Great Qing State sends his greetings to the Great President of the Great French Democratic State (*Da Fa minzhuguo da bolixitiande* 大法民主國大總理璽天德)”<sup>57</sup>. To this formal address, he adds a note explaining that *zongtong* is the popular designation for the president:

<sup>53</sup> Martin 1864, 2.35.

<sup>54</sup> Guo Songtao 1982, pp. 492–3, 496; Li Gui 李圭 . 1985. *Huanyou diqiu xinlu* 環游地球新錄 (New records of a journey around the world). Changsha: Yuelu shushe (*Zou xiang shijie congshu* 走向世界叢書 . *From East to West—Chinese Travellers before 1911*), p. 203.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. Li Shuchang . 1988. *Carnet de notes sur l’occident*. Translated by Shi Kangqiang. Paris: Éditions de la Maison des sciences de l’homme, p. 50.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. the quotations in Xiong 1986, pp. 128–31.

<sup>57</sup> Xue Fucheng 薛福成 . 1981. *Chushi siguo riji* 出使四國日記 (Diary of my mission to four countries). Changsha: Hunan renmin chubanshe (*Zou xiang shijie congshu* 走向世界叢書 . *From East to West—Chinese Travellers before 1911*), p. 35.

In the West, three kinds of states have been established: first, the *aimupaiya* 藹姆派牙 (empire), which may be translated as kingdom (*wanguo* 王國). Empires are either ruled by an emperor or by a king. Secondly, the *kaihentemu* 愷痕特姆 (kingdom), which can be translated as the territory of a feudal lord (*houguo* 侯國). Kingdoms are ruled by feudal lords or their wives. In both cases, power is passed on hereditary. The so-called *lipobolike* 立潑勃立克 (republic) is a democratic state (*minzhuguo* 民主國). The one who rules a republic is called *bolixitiande* (president) or *zongtong* (president) in the common language. He is elected by the people; in some cases he is superseded after seven years, in some cases after four.<sup>58</sup>

Among the above mentioned translations of ‘president’, the terms ‘leader’ (*touren*), ‘chief’ (*qiu*) and ‘chief of a tribe’ (*qiuchang*) have a deprecatory or derogatory meaning, just like the designations ‘barbarians’ (*yi* 夷) or ‘savages’ (*fan* 番) for Americans and Europeans. After the 1860s, these terms are rarely employed.

Among the many renderings discussed above the translation ‘emperor’ for ‘president’ deviated most dramatically from the original meaning of the English term. This caused some rather interesting conflicts in cultural exchanges between China and the West. In 1838, E. C. Bridgman had called the American leader, as we have seen above, ‘commander’ (*tongling*) in his *Brief description of America*, but in his *Da Mei lianbang zhiliue* 大美聯邦志略 (Brief account of the United States of America) of 1861, which had been revised by Guan Sifu 管嗣復 (died 1860), the ruler is called *guojun* 國君 (monarch): “The authority over military affairs is not shared between the states. All generals and admirals of the army and navy are controlled by the monarch”; “The power of executing the laws is monopolized by the monarch.”<sup>59</sup>

In the middle of the 1870s, many still adhered to Chinese customs and called the rulers of democratic states ‘emperor’ (*huangdi*) or ‘monarch’ (*guojun*). In his *Wanguo gongbao*, the American missionary Young J. Allen (Lin Lezhi 林樂知, 1836–1907) explained the difference between ‘emperor’, ‘king’ and ‘president’ in this way:

The titles ‘emperor’ or ‘king’ in foreign countries all refer to hereditary positions, and even a ‘great duke’ (*dagong* 大公) transmits the throne to

<sup>58</sup> Xue Fucheng 1981, p. 39.

<sup>59</sup> Elijah Coleman Bridgman (Bi Zhiwen 裨治文). 1862. “Jianguo lizheng” 建國立政 (The constitution), in: id. *Da Mei lianbang zhiliue* 大美聯邦志略 (Brief account of the United States of America). Shanghai: Mohai shuguan, vol. 1, *passim*.

his offspring. Only when somebody is called ‘president’ (*bolixitiande*) he clearly belongs to a democratic state and his position is not hereditary. Moreover, there is also a distinction between foreign emperors and kings: those who control only one country but no tributary states, are today called ‘kings’. Those who in addition to their own country have tributary states are called ‘emperors’. . . . only the president is generally called ‘lord of the people’ (*minzhu*), regardless of whether he has tributary states or not.<sup>60</sup>

However, most people were still unable to draw such clear distinctions. Even in the *Wanguo gongbao*, the Chinese editors continued to call the American leader ‘emperor’, in accordance with tradition and because they thought other designations would not express sufficient reverence.

When the former American president Ulysses Simpson Grant (1822–1885) visited Shanghai in May 1879, he was warmly received. Since Grant had served as president for two terms, the *Shenbao* called him ‘former *zongtong*’ or ‘former president’ (*qian bolixitiande* 前伯理璽天德). But ordinary Chinese would still call him ‘emperor of the state’ (*guohuang*) or ‘emperor’ (*huangdi*) in order to express their respect. Thus, an article published in the *Wanguo gongbao*, which was mainly written by the Chinese editor, was entitled “Records of the imperial favour of kindness during the visit to Shanghai by the Emperor of America who has served twice in this position” (*ji liangci zaiwei Mei huang lai Hu shengdian* 紀兩次在位美皇來滬盛典). Although Grant is called ‘former president’ (*qian bolixitiande*) later on in this article, the title ‘emperor’ (*huang* 皇) is retained. Moreover, we find many other expressions commonly used only in relation to the Chinese emperor, e.g. ‘ascending the throne’ (*jianzuo* 踐祚) or ‘resigning the throne’ (*shanwei* 禪位):

Before he ascended the throne (*jianzuo*), he had served as the supreme commander of the army. During the war between the north and the south, he carefully devised strategies which brought him many wonderful merits on the battlefield; wherever he fought, battles were won. He was deeply loved by the people and therefore they made him their emperor. This was his first election. After ascending the throne he shared the joy and the grievances of the people. But he fully conquered their hearts through two deeds: he abolished slavery for good and he exchanged treaties with China. This is why his mercy spread through-

<sup>60</sup> Young J. Allen (Lin Lezhi 林樂知). “Da Meiguo shi” 大每國事 (News from America), *Wanguo gongbao* 7 (311) (November 14, 1874).

out the empire and his virtue penetrated the people's hearts and soaked their bodies and bones. The people could not bear to adhere to the regulation about resigning the throne and elected him emperor once again in a second public election. ... The former president (*qian bolixitiande*) who was elected twice has now retired and lives in peace among the ordinary people.<sup>61</sup>

Finally, in this text two empty spaces were inserted before the word 'emperor' as was customary in Chinese documents in order to express respect.

Zheng Guanying 鄭觀應 (1842–1922) composed four poems of five character stanzas on the occasion of Grant's visit in which he praised the former president with words usually reserved for kings and emperors:

For eight years he occupied the throne / his fame as a man of excellent virtues spread throughout the world. / To occupy and then to resign the celestial throne, / this will become known around the world.<sup>62</sup>

Although Zheng did not employ the word 'emperor' for Grant, the terminology he used, like 'the throne' (*shenqi* 神器) or 'the celestial throne' (*jiuwu* 九五) was part of the standard vocabulary used in connection with kings and emperors.

For this reason, Young J. Allen felt compelled to publish a special editorial commentary in order to correct the misunderstanding. Allen explained that the president "is called the emperor of the state because the Chinese respect him and wish to emphasize this." "However", he continued:

... the word 'emperor' is used in China for a person who cannot be superseded by anyone else. Even if one knows that it is a term of highest reverence, it may hurt the feelings of the people. In our Western world, except for countries like Germany, Russia and Austria where the ruler calls himself emperor, great countries like England, America and France are not like this.<sup>63</sup>

Apparently 'emperor' was indeed not a positive term in countries like America or France, but had the implication of violating democracy: "Some among the people are not happy with this word. Therefore, the

<sup>61</sup> "Ji liang ci zai wei Mei huang lai Hu shengdian, benguan fushi" 紀兩次在位美皇來滬盛典本館附識 (American president Grant arrives in Shanghai, with a note by Young J. Allen), *Wanguo gongbao* 11 (541) (May 31, 1879), p. 525b.

<sup>62</sup> *Shenbao*, May 23, 1879, p. 4.

<sup>63</sup> "Ji liang ci zai wei Mei huang lai Hu shengdian, benguan fushi" 1879, p. 525b.

rulers of England, France and America are not delighted about the title emperor.”<sup>64</sup> Allen therefore urged his readers to refrain from calling the president (*bolixitiande*) ‘emperor’ in the future.

We should note that men like Shen Yugui 沈毓桂 (1808–1907), the Chinese editor of the *Wanguo gongbao* who assisted Young J. Allen, and Zheng Guanying, the author of the poems praising Grant, were of course aware of the difference between a president and an emperor, but original modes of thoughts and customs would have them believe that they would not express sufficient respect if they were to refrain from using the word ‘emperor’. Therefore they continued to employ the word even though they clearly knew that they were not dealing with an emperor in the traditional sense.

From the perspective of intellectual history, the notions of ‘liberty’, ‘democracy’ and ‘president’ cannot be separated from the Western parliamentary system and democratic ideas. The translation and usage within Chinese society is thus intimately connected with the understanding of and feeling towards the parliamentary system and democratic ideas.

Prior to the Opium War, Chinese scholars were utterly unfamiliar with the American-style democratic system. Therefore they employed expressions of a derogatory nature, like ‘tribe’ (*buluo* 部落), ‘leader’ (*touren*) or ‘chief of a tribe’ (*da qiu*), in a rather natural manner when speaking about the American political system and the leader of that country. When the understanding of America and the European countries increased after the Opium War, they realized that neither ‘chief’ nor ‘emperor’ were proper terms for the leader of the American nation and therefore employed phonetic renderings such as *bolixitiande* or semantic renderings like *zongtong*.

For the notions of ‘liberty’ and ‘democracy’ which denote political ideas as well as a political system, late Qing intellectuals very rarely coined phonetic translations. Rather than emulating the practice of Matteo Ricci (Li Madou 利瑪竇, 1552–1610) and Xu Guangqi 徐光啟 (1562–1633), who had rendered the Latin words *metaphysica* and *philosophia* as *modafeixijia* 默達費西加 and *feilusuoifeiya* 斐魯所費亞, they consistently used words of Chinese origin. (The terms *demokelaxi* 德莫克拉西 and *De xiansheng* 德先生 ‘Mr. De’ for ‘democracy’

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

appeared only during the May Fourth movement.) But precisely because the original Chinese words had a relatively stable meaning, it was impossible to match them completely with their Western counterparts. Whenever they were employed, they could be understood in their original Chinese sense.

The term *ziyou*, for example, could always be taken as ‘carefree’ (*ziyou zizai* 自由自在), ‘lawless, reckless’ (*wufa wutian* 無法無天) or ‘reckless, excessive’ (*fangdang buji* 放蕩不羈), and thus in meanings that were of course intolerable in the Chinese tradition. For this reason, Chinese intellectuals rarely propagated ‘liberty’ prior to the Hundred Days Reform of 1898. Chen Chi 陳熾 (1855–1900), for instance, mentioned ‘liberty’ (*ziyou*) but hastened to add that “the theory of liberty, which is propagated here and there, is prone to spread corrupt practices” and that it must therefore not be implemented.<sup>65</sup>

*Minzhu* is another example for Chinese contextuality. In his translation of Wheaton’s *Elements of International Law*, W. A. P. Martin clearly had employed the term in the sense of ‘democratic state’. But some Chinese intellectuals still understood it as the traditional ‘lord of the people’ (*min zhi zhu*), for example, in “Washington, the lord of Great America” (*Da Meiguo minzhu Huashengdun* 大美國民主華盛頓). Looking only at the characters, *minzhu* could of course be taken to mean ‘rulership by the people’ (*min wei zhu*) or ‘the people are the ruler’ (*min zuo zhu*) and thus refer to the precise opposite of ‘monarchy’ (*junzhu*), but in fact the traditional meaning continued to overshadow the new understanding for quite some time.

Among those who wanted to overcome absolute monarchy in the nineteenth century, there was almost no one who was not critical of ‘democracy’. Thinkers like Wang Tao considered neither democracy nor monarchy as a viable political system and saw both burdened with problems:

If the people are the rulers, the legal system will be confused, and it will be hard to bring the hearts and the system into line. Taken to the extreme, the result will be great harm indeed.<sup>66</sup>

<sup>65</sup> Chen Chi 陳熾. 1892. “Shen ji” 審機 (Investigations of the crisis), in: id. *Yongshu* 庸書 (Book for good government). Shanghai: Ziqiang xuezhai zhiping shi, part 2, 2.19.

<sup>66</sup> Wang Tao 王韜. 1959. “Zhong min” 重民 (On the importance of the people), in: id. *Taoyuan wenlu waibian* 弢園文錄外編 (Collection of essays of Wang Tao, second volume). Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, p. 23.

Constitutional monarchy was considered as the only good solution. Chen Chi called for the establishment of assemblies, but at the same time he criticized democracy by saying that “the system of rulership by the people is the beginning of chaos by allowing the people to offend their superiors”.<sup>67</sup> Song Yuren 宋育仁 (1857–1931) was apparently also afraid of democracy. For example, Song wrote that the establishment of a democratic system and the election of a president would lead to the “abrogation of laws and in consequence parties that wish to make rich and poor equal will emerge”.<sup>68</sup> The Hong Kong literati Hu Liyuan and He Qi were in favour of ‘people’s rights’ (*minquan* 民權) but not ‘democracy’ (*minzhu*):

‘People’s rights’ means that the ruler will still inherit his position. ‘Democracy’ means that the people select the person holding power in a state for a period of several years. When propagating ‘people’s rights’, we mean that the sovereign of China should inherit the throne from generation to generation and that the celestial throne should not be changed around [from one person to another]; we do not favour a democratic state.<sup>69</sup>

Only when the revolutionary tide began to rise after the turn of the century, Chinese intellectuals began to praise liberty (*ziyou*) and democracy (*minzhu*). Liang Qichao 梁啟超 (1873–1929), for instance, wrote: “Liberty is a universal principle. It is essential for human life, and there is no place where it cannot be applied.”<sup>70</sup>

Historians will be even more familiar with the enthusiastic praise of liberty and democracy by Zou Rong 鄒容 (1885–1905) and others. Thus, as I have shown above, the *Commercial Press Dictionary* of 1902 no longer explains ‘democracy’ in the previously customary terms of ‘disorderly administration’ (*luanguan*) or ‘abuse of power’ (*nongquan*), but rather as ‘government by the people’ (*minzheng*), ‘control of state affairs by the common people’ (*baixing caoquan*) and ‘democratic policy’ (*minzhu zhi guozheng*). In my opinion this change

<sup>67</sup> Chen Chi 陳熾 . 1986. “Shengshi weiyang xu” 盛世危言序 (Preface to *Shengshi weiyang*). Quoted in Xiong Yuezhi 1986, p. 137.

<sup>68</sup> Song Yuren 宋育仁 . 1895. *Taixi geguo caifeng ji* 泰西各國采風集 (Notes on the mores and customs of diverse countries in the West). n.p.: Xiuhai shanfang, p. 11.

<sup>69</sup> He Qi and Hu Liyuan 1994, p. 406.

<sup>70</sup> Liang Qichao 梁啟超 . 1936a [1903]. “Xinmin shuo” 新民說 (The new citizen), in: id. *Yinbingshi zhuanji* 飲冰室專集 (Selected monographs from the Ice-Drinker’s Studio). Edited by Lin Zhijun 林志鈞 . Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan, 4.1–162, 40.

is clearly related to the changed view of democracy among Chinese intellectuals in this period.

#### CONCLUSION

The words *ziyou*, *minzhu* and *zongtong* were all used in classical Chinese. However, their traditional meanings are not identical with their modern meanings. *Ziyou* in its new meaning of ‘liberty’ is an extension and abstraction of the old word, which it still contains. *Minzhu* in its meaning of ‘democracy’ retains only the morphological structure of the old word, while both the structure and the semantic contents are very different. In the process of its evolution, however, there was a stage when the structure was still identical with the old word while the meaning had already changed. *Zongtong* in its meaning of ‘president’ has the same structure as the old word, but is completely different semantically, morphologically and with respect to its syntactical function. This shows that the production of neologisms was a complex process in which the understanding of foreign things, foreign systems and foreign ideas continuously deepened. While the political lexicon underwent continued modifications, the newly created vocabulary had to be reconciled with the habits of the Chinese language.

*Translated by Natascha Vittinghoff*

## APPENDIX

‘LIBERTY’, ‘DEMOCRACY’ AND ‘PRESIDENT’ IN ENGLISH-CHINESE  
DICTIONARIES FROM THE LATE QING PERIOD*Table 1: ‘Liberty’ in early English-Chinese dictionaries*

<i>Source<sup>a</sup></i>	<i>Chinese</i>	<i>Pinyin</i>	<i>Literal retranslation</i>
RM 1823	自主之理	<i>zizhu zhi li</i>	(principle of self-determination)
WM 1847	自主	<i>zizhu</i>	(self-determination)
	自主之權	<i>zizhu zhi quan</i>	(right of self-determination)
	自主之理	<i>zizhu zhi li</i>	(principle of self-determination)
	任意擅專	<i>renyi shanzhu</i>	(to be left to one’s own will)
	自由得意	<i>ziyou deyi</i>	(to feel free and at ease)
	由得自己	<i>you de ziji</i>	(up to oneself)
	自主之事	<i>zizhu zhi shi</i>	(self-determined undertaking)
WL 1869	自主	<i>zizhu</i>	(self-determination)
	自由	<i>ziyou</i>	(liberty)
	治己之權	<i>zhiji zhi quan</i>	(right of self-government)
	自操之權	<i>zizao zhi quan</i>	(right of self-organization)
	自主之理	<i>zizhu zhi li</i>	(principle of self-determination)
	– sub-entry: ‘natural liberty’		
	任從心意	<i>rencong xinyi</i>	(allowed to follow one’s intentions)
	任從性而行	<i>rencongxing er xing</i>	(allowed to follow one’s nature)
	– sub-entry: ‘civil liberty’		
	法中任行	<i>fazhong renxing</i>	(allowed to act within the law)
	– sub-entry: ‘political liberty’		
	國治己之權	<i>guo zhi ji zhi quan</i>	(right of national self-administration)
	– sub-entry: ‘religious liberty’		
	任意擇教	<i>renyi zejiao</i>	(to choose a doctrine according to one’s will)
CP 1902	自主	<i>zizhu</i>	(self-determination)
	自由	<i>ziyou</i>	(liberty)
	自操之權	<i>zizao zhi quan</i>	(right of self-organization)
	自主之理	<i>zizhu zhi li</i>	(principle of self-determination)
	無別人拘束	<i>wu bieren jushu</i>	(not restrained by others)
	– sub-entry: ‘natural liberty’		
	任從心意	<i>rencong xinyi</i>	(allowed to follow one’s intentions)

Table 1: 'Liberty' in early English-Chinese dictionaries (cont.)

Source <sup>a</sup>	Chinese	Pinyin	Literal retranslation
	率性而行	<i>shuaixing er xing</i>	(acting according to one's nature)
	– sub-entry: 'civil liberty'		
	法中任行	<i>fazhong renxing</i>	(allowed to act with in the law)
	– sub-entry: 'political liberty'		
	國治己之權	<i>guo zhi ji zhi quan</i>	(right of national self-administration)
	– sub-entry: 'religious liberty'		
	任意擇教	<i>renyi zejiao</i>	(to choose a doctrine according to one's will)

Note: (a) In this and the following tables RM 1823 refers to Robert Morrison's *Dictionary of the Chinese Language*; WM 1847 to Walter Medhurst's *English and Chinese Dictionary*; WL 1869 to Wilhelm Lobscheid's *English and Chinese Dictionary*; and CP 1902 to the *Commercial Press English and Chinese Pronouncing Dictionary*.

Table 2: 'Democracy' in early English-Chinese dictionaries

Source	Chinese	Pinyin	Literal retranslation
RM 1823	既不可無人 統率亦不可 多人亂管	<i>ji buke wuren tongshuai yi buke duoren luanguan</i>	(if it is improper that nobody leads, it is equally improper that a multitude of people govern disorderly)
	– added English explanation:		'[democracy] is improper, since it is improper to be without a leader'
WM 1847	眾人的國統	<i>zhongren de guotong</i>	(administration of the country by the masses)
	眾人的治理	<i>zhongren de zhili</i>	(rule of the masses)
	– added English explanation:		'government of the rabble'
	多人亂管	<i>duoren luanguan</i>	(disorderly administration by the many)
	小民弄權	<i>xiaomin nongquan</i>	(abuse of power by the mean)
WL 1869	民政	<i>minzheng</i>	(government by the people)
	眾人管轄	<i>zhongren guanxia</i>	(administration by the masses)
	百姓弄權	<i>baixing nongquan</i>	(abuse of power by the common people)
CP 1902	民政	<i>minzheng</i>	(government by the people)
	百姓操權	<i>baixing caoquan</i>	(control of state affairs by the common people)
	民主之國政	<i>minzhu zhi guozheng</i>	(government by the people)

Table 3: 'President' in early English-Chinese dictionaries

Source	Chinese	Pinyin	Literal retranslation	
RM 1823	長	<i>zhang</i>	(senior)	
	頭目	<i>toumu</i>	(leader [of a gang] etc.)	
WM 1847	監督	<i>jiandu</i>	(inspector)* <sup>a</sup>	
	頭目	<i>toumu</i>	(leader [of a gang] etc.)	
	尚書	<i>shangshu</i>	(minister, president of a board)*	
	正堂	<i>zhengtang</i>	(magistrate or prefect)*	
	天卿	<i>tianqing</i>	(president of the board of appointments)*	
	地卿	<i>diquing</i>	(president of the board of revenue)*	
	春卿	<i>chunqing</i>	(president of the board of rites)*	
	夏卿	<i>xiaqing</i>	(president of the board of war)*	
	秋卿	<i>qiuqing</i>	(president of the board of justice)*	
	冬卿	<i>dongqing</i>	(president of the board of works)*	
	WL 1869	長	<i>zhang</i>	(senior)
		掌者	<i>zhangzhe</i>	(superintendent, manager)
		首事	<i>shoushi</i>	(the person in charge)
理長		<i>lizhang</i>	(senior manager)	
管總		<i>guanrong</i>	(chief manager)	
頭目		<i>toumu</i>	(leader [of a gang] etc.)	
監督		<i>jiandu</i>	(inspector)	
正堂		<i>zhengtang</i>	(magistrate or prefect)*	
督憲		<i>duxian</i>	(governor-general, viceroy)*	
尚書		<i>shangshu</i>	(minister, president of a board)*	
掌院		<i>zhangyuan</i>	(chancellor [of the Hanlin Academy])*	
掌院老師		<i>zhangyuan laoshi</i>	(chancellor [of the Hanlin Academy])*	
天卿		<i>tianqing</i>	(president of the board of appointments)*	
地卿		<i>diquing</i>	(president of the board of revenue)*	
春卿		<i>chunqing</i>	(president of the board of rites)*	
夏卿		<i>xiaqing</i>	(president of the board of war)*	
秋卿		<i>qiuqing</i>	(president of the board of justice)*	
冬卿		<i>dongqing</i>	(president of the board of works)*	
– sub-entry: 'the President of the United States'				
		花旗合部 大選	<i>huaqi hebu daxuan</i>	(appointed leader of the United Banner States)

*Table 3: 'President' in early English-Chinese dictionaries (cont.)*

<i>Source</i>	<i>Chinese</i>	<i>Pinyin</i>	<i>Literal retranslation</i>
CP 1902	掌者	<i>zhangzhe</i>	(superintendent, manager)
	總管	<i>zongguan</i>	(supervisor-in-chief)*
	頭目	<i>toumu</i>	(leader [of a gang] etc.)
	監督	<i>jiandu</i>	(inspector)
	正堂	<i>zhengtang</i>	(magistrate or prefect)*
	督憲	<i>duxian</i>	(governor-general, viceroy)*
	尚書	<i>shangshu</i>	(minister, president of one of the six boards)*
	掌院	<i>zhangyuan</i>	(chancellor [of the Hanlin Academy])*
	掌院老師	<i>zhangyuan laoshi</i>	(chancellor [of the Hanlin Academy])*
		– sub-entry: 'the President of the United States'	
	美國總統	<i>Meiguo zongtong</i>	(the American president)

Note: (a) Entries marked by an asterisk (\*) were derived from late imperial administrative language.

