

Living up to the Image of the Ideal Public Leader: George Washington's Image in China

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Introduction

Money, in the form of coins and later bills, was certainly the most widely—and often internationally—circulating carrier of images before the print, analog, and digital media took over. A cursory look at European holdings in numismatic collections will show a vast collection of profiles of political leaders imprinted on their surface since before Alexander's time. Even the Greek word from which our term “character” is derived comes from the image engraved on the coining die. Julius Caesar was the first living ruler appearing on coins.¹ After him, this became routine. This can be seen in Fig. 1, a Roman gold coin (aureus) from the period of Septimius Severus (struck 193 × 194 CE),² a thaler of Emperor Maximilian (minted 1486 × 1508), and a Maria Theresa thaler (minted 1780) with the political motto “iustitia et clementia” (“justice and mercy”). The last gained currency in Qing China, probably brought there by Arab merchants.³ These public images are supplemented by a vast array of other depictions of public leaders that range from public monuments in squares to images of such leaders as gods in public temples and paintings as patrons in publicly accessible churches.

The contrast to China is stark. The cash coins and the paper money contained references to the dynasty and/or the motto of the reign period (*nianhao* 年號) when the coin was minted or the bills printed, but never the image of the ruler or any other authority figure such as a god or Confucius. Examples are a Qing cash coin from the Jiaqing 嘉慶 period (minted 1796 × 1820) with

1 J. M. C. Toynbee, “Portraits of Julius Caesar,” *Greece & Rome* 4, no. 1 (March 1957): 2–9.

2 On the dating of the coin, see Philip V. Hill, “Notes on the Coinage of Septimius Severus and His Family, A.D. 193–217,” *The Numismatic Chronicle and Journal of the Royal Numismatic Society*, Seventh Series, 4 (1964): 169–188; Harold Mattingly, “The Coinage of Septimius Severus and His Times. Mints and Chronology,” *The Numismatic Chronicle and Journal of the Royal Numismatic Society* 12, no. 47 (1932): 190–191.

3 Adrian E. Schloegl, “Maria Theresa's Thaler: A Case of International Money,” *Eastern Economic Journal* 27, no. 4 (Fall 2001): 444–445.



Fig. 1: From top to bottom, Roman aureus from the period of Septimius Severus, struck 193 × 194 CE (Classical Numismatic Group, GNU Free Documentation License); Thaler portraying Emperor Maximilian, minted 1486 × 1519 (Classical Numismatic Group, GNU Free Documentation License); 1780 Thaler of Maria Theresa (Wiki Commons, Public Domain, uploaded by user Carlomorino).

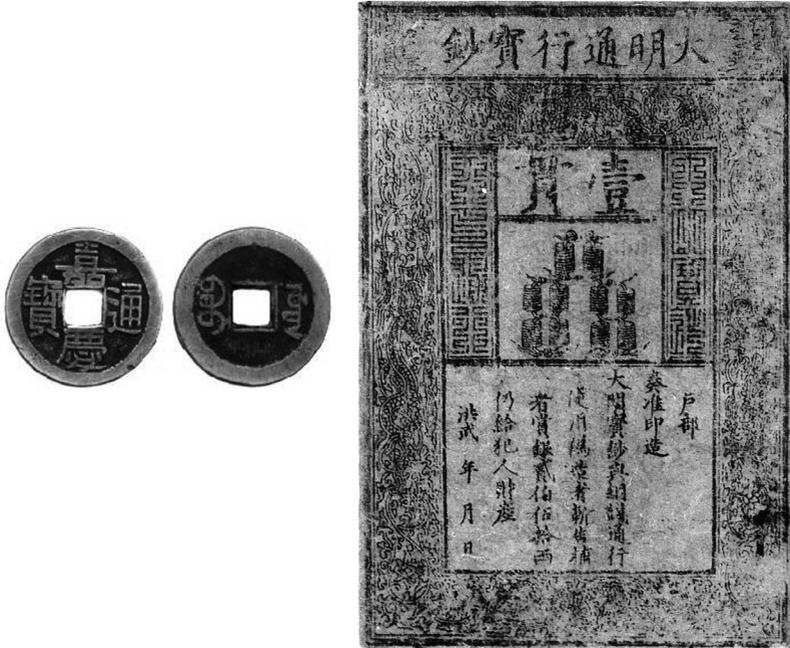


Fig. 2: Qing cash coin from the Jiaqing period, minted 1796 × 1820 (CC-BY-SA 4.0, uploaded by John Ferguson); Example of Ming paper money from the fourteenth-century Hongwu period (Wiki Commons).

multilingual inscriptions⁴ and a Ming piece of paper money from the Hongwu 洪武 period (fourteenth century) (Fig. 2).⁵

The public display of the leader's image in Europe came with a substantial public presence of their flesh bodies in grand rituals such as coronations, marriages, funerals, or courts of justice. While records indicate that even during the Song dynasty the face of the ruler was not off limits for the general Chinese public, it seems that it became ever more elusive. The Qing eventually set up the court as a moving forbidden city where the walls that were lacking were replaced by strict orders to the people living along the

4 For a magisterial overview of the development of Qing cash coins, see Werner Burger, *Ch'ing Cash*, 2 vols. (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Museum and Art Gallery, 2016). For the reasons behind their subsequent replacement by silver in the late Jiaqing period, see Richard von Glahn, *Fountain of Fortune: Money and Monetary Policy in China, 1000–1700* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 104–112.

5 On the Hongwu emperor's faith in paper money and its dire consequences, see Ray Huang, *Taxation and Governmental Finance in Sixteenth-Century Ming China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974), 69–81.

roads the imperial cortege was taking—for example to the Summer Palace or the imperial tombs—to keep their shutters closed. During the last decades of the Qing, the face of the ruler was doubly hidden. From the 1860s onward, actual power was wielded by women for whom there was no place in the ritual setup of the matinal court audience; therefore, they were present behind a veil and were issuing their directives from the off. This meant that even the limited visual presence of the ruler to the higher ranks of officialdom could no longer be guaranteed.

I would suggest that the absence of the imperial individual image in the Chinese public sphere has its roots in a particular and well-articulated ideology. The ruler as an individual is to disappear into the ritual framework of his role and is to rigidly refrain from pursuing his personal interests or fancies. The ideal ruler should follow the popular phrase *junzi dan ru shui* 君子淡如水 (the man of quality is insipid like water). Rulers who lived out their individuality were reckoned as being those who wrecked their dynasty. The histories are full of stories about such rulers, and the handbooks for proper ruler behavior such as the *Dijian tushuo* 帝鑒圖說 (originally published in 1573, with an official Japanese reprint in 1842) list and illustrate their misdeeds as negative examples.⁶ When the Qin dynasty at the very beginning of imperial China's history late in the third century BCE changed its coinage from large and clumsy cast-iron money to small copper coins that were modelled on Central Asian currencies (see Fig. 3 for an example of a near-contemporary Bactrian coin),⁷ it did so with a marked difference. In place of the head of a ruler or god in the middle of the coin, the Chinese coins simply had a hole (Fig. 4). This feature was preserved to the end of imperial China.

Moving forward into the Republican period, we find that this seemingly stark contrast has disappeared. After 1928, the image of Sun Yat-sen 孫逸仙 (1866–1925) is all-present, be it in meeting halls, schoolbooks, on stamps, or on paper money. The practices surrounding the image share a large number of features with those surrounding diverse contemporary figures such as the American president, Mussolini, the Japanese emperor, Stalin, or Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. During his lifetime, Sun was supremely aware of the importance of the new medium of photography and made sure to be present

6 Zhang Juzheng 張居正, *Dijian tushuo* 帝鑒圖說 [The Emperor's mirror, illustrated and explained], s.n., 1573. See Lin Lijiang 林麗江, "Wan Ming gujian banhua *Dijian tushuo* zhi yanjiu 晚明規諫版畫《帝鑒圖說》之研究 [A study of the late Ming remonstrative edition of *The Emperor's Mirror, Illustrated and Explained*]," *Gugong xueshu jikan* 故宮學術季刊 33, no. 2 (2015): 83–142.

7 See Michael Loewe, *The Government of the Qin and Han Empires: 221 BCE–220 CE* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2006), 157. For a comparative perspective, see Walter Scheidel, "The Divergent Evolution of Coinage in Eastern and Western Eurasia," in *The Monetary Systems of the Greeks and Romans*, ed. W. V. Harris (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 267–286.



Fig. 3: Silver tetradrachm of the Bactrian King Eucratides I, minted 171 × 145 BCE (CC-BY-SA-3.0, Wiki Commons, uploaded by user Rani nurmai).



Fig. 4: Qin dynasty banliang 半兩 copper coin with central void, 221 × 206 BCE (CC-BY-2.0, Wiki Commons, uploaded by user Baomi).

pervasively and with all the markers of his political message. He was not alone. Since Yuan Shikai 袁世凱 (1859–1916), who succeeded Sun in his short-lived presidency in 1912, about every aspiring Chinese political leader, but also the aspiring media stars, were stylizing their appearance and image so as to enhance their appeal and credibility with the public. This paper will study the dynamics of the cultural flow which brought this practice to China, characterized its acceptance, and led to its integration into a body of symbolical political practices that continued to be followed—with other actors—in the communist areas and in the PRC after 1949.

The state of the art

Chinese historians such as Zou Zhenhuan 鄒振環, Xiong Yuezhi 熊月之 in the People's Republic, and Pan Guangzhe 潘光哲 in Taiwan have done substantial research into Chinese writings about George Washington during the late nineteenth century and the Republican period. Being historians with an exclusive commitment to textual sources, however, they have not addressed one of the key elements in the “image” of the public leader, the visual representation of his public persona, the role of these leaders in creating and managing their own, including their posthumous, image, or the transcultural dimension of the ways in which they did so.⁸ There also is some substantial research about KMT policies with regard to the image of Sun Yat-sen dealt with in the second part of this study.⁹ My own study on enshrining Sun Yat-sen attempted to provide a framework for the integrated analysis of Sun Yat-sen's burial as a total event that marks the transition from solely ritual control to

8 Pan Guangzhe 潘光哲, *Huashengdun zai Zhongguo: zhizuo guofu* 華盛頓在中國—製作國父 [Washington in China: making a father of the nation] (Taipei: Sanmin, 2006). Pan's study of the development of the image of George Washington in China and its impact on the image of Sun Yat-sen as “father of the nation,” *guofu* 國父, has contributed much to my understanding of the development of the *guofu* concept in China. See also the study by Kevin Scott Wong, “The Transformation of Culture: Three Chinese Views of America,” *American Quarterly* 48, no. 2 (June 1996): 201–232, with its discussion of the image of George Washington. Xiong Yuezhi pursued the question whether the Washington biographies circulating in late Qing China were modeled after those of worthies of old. Endowing Washington with great virtue, the elements of separation of powers, election, and democratic control were not stressed so that he could be adopted for a strong stance against British colonialism while also being a model of autocratic rule. See Xiong Yuezhi 熊月之, “Huashengdun xingxiang de Zhongguo jiedu jiqi dui Xinhai geming de yingxiang 華盛頓形象的中國解讀及其對辛亥革命的影響,” *Shilin* 史林 1 (2012): 88–103 (English translation: “George Washington's Image in China and its Impact on the 1911 Revolution,” *Journal of Modern Chinese History* 6, no. 1 (2012): 45–63); Zou Zhenhuan 鄒振環, “‘Geming biaomu’ yu wan Qing yingxiang puxi de chongjian: Huashengdun yu Napoleon zhuanji wenxian de yikan jiqi yingxiang 革命木末與晚清英雄譜系的重建: 華盛頓與拿破侖傳記文獻的譯刊及其影響 [‘The Fountainhead of the Revolution’ and the construction of heroes’ genealogies in the late Qing: translations of biographical materials on Washington and Napoleon and their impact],” *Lishi wenxian* 歷史文獻 9 (2005): 393–425.

9 Chen Yunqian 陳蘊茜, “Hefaxing yu ‘Sun Zhongshan’ zhengzhi xiangzheng fuhao de jiangou 合法性與‘孫中山’政治象徵符號的建構 [Legitimacy and the construction of ‘Sun Yat-sen’ as an emblematic political symbol],” *Jianghai xuekan* 江海學刊 2 (2006): 170–176; Chen Yunqian 陳蘊茜, “‘Zongli yixiang’ yu Sun Zhongshan chongbai 總理遺像與孫中山崇拜 [‘Portraits of the Deceased President’ and the cult of Sun Yat-sen],” *Jiangsu shehui kexue* 江蘇社會科學 6 (2006): 106–117; Chen Yunqian 陳蘊茜, “Shenti zhengzhi: guojia quanli yu Minguo Zhongshan zhuang de liuxing 身體政治: 國家權力與民國中山裝的流行 [Body politics: state power and the popularity of the (Sun) Yat-sen suit in Republican China],” *Xueshu yuekan* 學術月刊 39, no. 9 (2007): 139–147; Li Xia 李霞 and Li Gongzhong 李恭忠, “Lingxiu chongbai yu minzu rentong—Huashengdun, Sun Zhongshan he Mao Zedong chongbai bijiao yanjiu 領袖崇拜與民族認同—華盛頓, 孫中山和毛澤東崇拜比較研究 [Leadership cults and national identity: a comparative study of the cults of Washington, Sun Yat-sen, and Mao Zedong],” *Tianfu xinlun* 天府新論 2 (2006): 128–131; Li Gongzhong 李恭忠, “‘Zongli jinianzhou’ yu Minguo zhengzhi wenhua 總理紀念週與民國政治文化 [The ‘President’s Memorial Week’ and political culture in Republican China],” *Fujian luntan* 福建論壇 1 (2006): 56–60.

both political and ritual control, but did not in any detail cover the historical and transcultural dimension on Sun self-fashioning his image.¹⁰ The present article grew out of a footnote for this study that refused to stop growing.

The fountainhead: George Washington

The Protestant missionaries from early in the nineteenth century published sizeable amounts of writings introducing various aspects of the West outside of religion to a Chinese readership. Zhao Ruguang 趙如光, who helped Devello Zelotos Sheffield (1841–1913) with his 1882 *Wanguo tongjian* 萬國通鑒 (A composite world history), perceptively noted: “Each one of the Westerners coming East to spread the Truth publishes a good number of works outside religious works, and these are not just for entertainment, but in fact provide some support to spreading the true way.”¹¹ Thus, we have a substantial number of texts from the hands of the early Protestant missionaries ranging from overviews of American, British, and European history, to geography, to the Pomeranian missionary Karl Friedrich August Gützlaff (1803–1851) penning a handbook on international trade.¹² It is in these texts that the Chinese image of the first such public leader forms. He is none other than George Washington.

In tune with the broader meaning the term “image” has acquired in modern times, the “image” of the political leader is part of a complex feedback loop of performances and perceptions. Talking about male leaders, it consists of his political program and the values this embodies; of his political deeds and merits; of the associates he surrounds himself with; and of the coding inscribed into his public appearance, including his body language, clothing, hairdo, beard, and mien as they might appear in paintings, photographs, or might be lampooned in cartoons.

These elements come together for the first time in China in Xu Jiyu’s 徐繼畲 (1795–1873) world geography cum history, the *Yinghuan zhilüe* 瀛寰志略 (Brief account of the maritime circuit, 1848). After a precis of the Boston Tea Party, Xu offers a biographical note of George Washington:

There was Washington, a man from the American province. Born in Yongzheng 9 [1721], he lost his father when he was nine years old and was raised by his mother. From his early years on he held

10 This argument is developed in detail in Rudolf G. Wagner, “Ritual, Architecture, Politics, and Publicity during the Republic: Enshrining Sun Yat-sen,” in *Chinese Architecture and the Beaux Arts*, ed. Jeffrey Cody, Nancy Steinhardt, and Tony Atkin (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2011), 223–278.

11 Quoted in Pan, *Huashengdun*, 59. All translations are my own, unless otherwise stated.

12 For a still useful overview, see Suzanne Wilson Barnett and John King Fairbank, eds., *Christianity in China: Early Protestant Missionary Writings* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985).

much promise [*you dazhi* 有大志], and excelled in both fields, that of learning and that of warlike arts. His heroism [*yinglie* 英烈], made him stand out. When he was engaged in the British military, they were in a war with the French and when local barbarians were plundering at the southern border, he led troops to subdue them, subduing all who opposed him, but then the British general denied his merit and made no record of it. When his countrymen wanted to make him their commander (after the Boston tea party), he excused himself claiming sickness. He returned home, locked his doors and did not come out. At this time, however, the crowds were already resisting the British and pushed him hard to become commander. Things were moving very swiftly so that weapons, powder, and provisions were all lacking, but Washington roused them with his righteous spirit [*yiqi* 義氣]. Once arrangements had been made, they besieged a large city. At the time, a British general amassed his navy outside the city. When suddenly, however, a violent wind rose and the ships were all scattered, Washington used the opportunity to attack and took the city. Later the British army got together a large contingent, got the upper hand in the war, and Washington's army was defeated. The multitude got discouraged and wished to disband, but Washington was unperturbed, gathered them together to form an army, went again to war and was victorious. From then on the bloody war lasted for eight years with changing fortunes, but Washington's resoluteness [*zhiqi* 志氣], never faltered while the British army weakened. France raised an army with a nationwide call to arms and crossed the sea (to help Washington) and with Washington attacked the British army from two sides; Spain and Holland also blocked their troops and urged reconciliation so that the British were unable to sustain it and made a treaty with Washington, dividing the territory to form to neighboring states with the northern cold and barren lands continuing to belong to the British and the fat and fertile southern parts all going to Washington. This was in the year Qianlong 乾隆 47 [1782]. Once Washington had settled the state, he resigned his military powers and wished to return to his fields, but the people would not let him go and insisted on establishing him as the lord of the land [*guozhu* 國主]. Washington, however, reasoned [*yi* 議], with the people thus: "To get hold of a state and then pass it on to one's sons and grandsons, is selfishness. For the charge of shepherding the people it is best to choose someone with virtue to assume it." [...] From the outset, once Washington had made peace with the British, he cut down on the military and refrained from war and concentrated all effort on agriculture and commerce.

He issued an order, saying: “If henceforth a president greedily plots to get another state’s port, strips away the people’s fat or raises troops and raises enmity, you people are to execute him.” He kept only twenty warships and ten thousand men under arms, and still the land was restored and expanded, the granaries were overflowing, the different regions were of one mind [*tongxin* 同心], and the command was unified with the consequence that the other powers were in peaceful relations with them and did not dare to insult them. Since they concluded the treaty with the British to the present already more than sixty years have passed, and this without a single military conflagration, [but] the ships [from America] coming to Canton every year are second in number [only] to the British.

Authorial Comment:

Washington was an outstanding man. In getting things going he surpassed [Chen] Sheng 陳勝 [d. 208 BCE] and [Wu] Guang 吳廣 [d. 208 BCE, who led the rebellion against the Qin], in setting up a separate state he was more heroic than Cao 曹操 [155–220 BCE] and Liu [Bei] 劉備 [161–222 BCE] [founders of the successor states of the Han]. But after he had taken up “the three cubit long sword” and expanded the borders to ten thousand *li*, he did neither claim noble rank [of king although this had been suggested to him] nor hand on power to his sons and grandsons, but established an election system which got close to the [ancient Chinese ideal] that all-under-heaven [be] a commonweal [*datong* 大同], and is on par in glory with the bequests of the Three Dynasties [of China’s Golden Age]. In his management of the country he put emphasis on letting others be first and on improving public morals, but, completely different from other countries, he put no value on military achievements. I have seen his portrait: his bearing is peerlessly strong and resolute! Ah! How not call him a giant among men!¹³

After this extraordinary introduction and personal comment, Xu Jiyou comes back to the US and George Washington in a final personal comment at the end of the section.

Personal comment:

The northern and southern Americas stretch out over tens of thousands of *li*, but the best part is the land of America [i.e. the United States]. With its moderate climate and rich soil it is on par

13 Xu Jiyou 徐繼畲, *Yinghuan zhilüe* 瀛寰志略 [Brief account of the maritime circuit] (Shanghai: Shanghai shudian, 2001), 276–277. Originally published in 1848.

with China. The English taking possession of it after crossing ten thousand *li* of ocean might be said to have snatched a pearl right from under the black dragon's jaws. Growing in wealth and numbers for over two hundred years their wealth exceeded all others, but then, because of excessive exploitation, they [the British] suddenly were unable to rake it in any further. With all their aggrandizing their state and attention to income, they wrecked their fortune!

The United States as a country spreads out over ten thousand *li*, it has neither established nobles and kings, nor does it go by the rule of succession. With their public institutions following public opinion, they have set up a system without parallel in ancient or modern times, no wonder that one cannot but call Washington the pinnacle among the personalities of old and new times in the West!¹⁴

Xu offers the depiction of a man of highest purpose and public spirit, who led his country to independence from oppressive British rule with ample support from other countries, but then neither assumed the crown that was offered to him nor stressed warlike qualities. Instead he set up a system to select the man with the virtue to assume the responsibility of the president, reduced the military to a minimum, refrained from war, and focused on developing agriculture and commerce with the effect that its international trade was second only to that of Britain. The vocabulary used to describe the man establishes explicit links to the Three Dynasties of Chinese antiquity, when China was ruled by sages, and to the highest Chinese values such as the willingness to give precedence to others (*rang* 讓) and to the public interest (*gong* 公). The peaceful and prosperous country that is united in mind and structure is able to take its place among the nations and even the big powers do not dare to insult it. The character of the extraordinary man that was George Washington, shows in his portrait, which was seen by Xu. It shows a man whose mien and bearing is strong and resolute (*xiongyi* 雄毅), beyond comparison. The term is associated with a stern and sober expression of great men who speak little and have much martial prowess and discipline.¹⁵

14 Xu Jiyu, *Yinghuan zhilüe*, 290–291.

15 The term is used in biographies to describe the character of extraordinary men. Examples culled from dictionaries include “[Wang Zhongsi 王忠嗣 (704?–748?)] was strong and resolute with few words; with stern earnestness he went about military strategy” (*xiongyi guayan, yanzhong you wulüe* 雄毅寡言, 嚴重有武略), see “Wang Zhongsi zhuan 王忠嗣傳 [Biography of Wang Zhongsi], in *Jiu Tang shu* 舊唐書 [History of the Former Tang],” ed. Liu Xu 劉昫 et al. (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1975), 3197; and “[Zhang Fu 張輔 (1375–1449)] was strong and resolute, stiff and serious, and rigid in maintaining military discipline” (*xiongyi fangyan, zhijun zhengsu* 雄毅方嚴, 治軍整肅), see “Zhang Fu zhuan 張輔傳 [Biography of Zhang Fu],” *Ming shi* 明史 [History of the Ming], ed. Zhang Tingyu 張廷玉 et al. (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974), 4219.

Xu's description takes up and develops the themes already present in earlier depictions of Washington. In 1846, Liang Tingnan 梁廷柟 (1796–1861) had eulogized Washington in his *Haiguo sishuo* 海國四說 [Four treatises on maritime countries]. After a note of how the French had been deterred by Washington's prestige from using the presidential transition to Adams for an attack, Liang describes the people's reaction to Washington's death:

As a human being, he was public minded and correct without flinching, did not deal in punishments and rewards [to control people], did not shirk hard labor, and regularly on days off would lead the officials and people to support the farmers in plowing. The people in the country spread his praise. When he died, the entire nation was in mourning, and in the thought of securing his merits gave him the honorific “father of the nation.” To this day, when talk touches him there still is deep feeling.

This seems to be the first documented time that a Chinese author made use of the term “father of the nation.”¹⁶ As we shall see, Liang took it from the first biographical sketches of Washington in Chinese from the hands of American missionaries.

Liang's characterization of an ideal political leader goes hand in hand with a description of the United States that again reads like an implied comparison with China. For Liang, the “wealth and power” (*fuqiang* 富強) of the United States was due to its “people working hard” (*bumin zhi qinfen* 部民之勤奮). It was also due to the institutional structures in place in the US, namely that they “did not set up a king” (*bu li guowang* 不立國王) but “only installed a president” (*jinshe zongling* 僅設總領), and because the “state government followed public opinion” (*guozheng cao zhi yulun* 國政操之輿論); what was “said there was inevitably executed” (*suo yan bi shixing* 所言必施行); and “if there was something bad, it was always reported to higher authorities” (*you hai bi shang wen* 有害必上聞). “Government matters were simple and government action was expeditious” (*shi jian zheng su* 事簡政速), “orders were executed and prohibitions maintained” (*ling xing qin zhi* 令行禁止), “not different from the rule of wise rulers” (*yu xianbi suo zhi wuyi* 與賢辟所治無異) from the Chinese past.

The association of George Washington's America with the Three Dynasties of Chinese antiquity, as we see it in both Xu Jiyu and Liang Tingnan, again follows earlier precedents. In his recently discovered *Miscellaneous Notes on Foreign Affairs* (*Yangshi zalu* 洋事雜錄) from 1846, Commissioner Lin Zexu 林則徐 (1785–1850) in Canton, famous for having British opium burned,

16 Liang Tingnan 梁廷柟, *Haiguo sishuo* 海國四說 [Four treatises on maritime countries] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1993), 80.

elevates George Washington to a position among the sages (*shengren* 聖人), that rare breed of individuals able to bring Great Peace (*taiping* 泰平) to their countries or all-under-heaven: “The Americans in former years fought to recover their territory and made the officer Washington their leader. This is why the Americans to this day honor him like a sage. People today, whether they have a son, open an office, build a ship or have a new settlement, take the name for it often from Washington, to benefit from its blessing.”¹⁷

The eulogy on George Washington is accompanied by praise on the country he had been instrumental in setting up. A particular emphasis is given to electing the most qualified to be leaders, and the option of recall if expectations are not met. “The foreigners [Americans] because they were concerned that once they had a king again, he would after a while again resort to tyrannical rule, deliberated not to install one.” And:

They formerly belonged to England, but since a few decades ago they have set themselves up as an independent country [*zi wei yi guo* 自爲一國], yet they do not have a king to hold power [*bing wu guowang tongshe* 並無國王統攝]. In the territory there are twenty-four districts [states], each of them elects one upright person as district head. He is in charge of all matters from the administration of justice to grain supplies with a rule that some have to change every five years, others every three years. If someone’s administration has been fair and equitable [*gongyun* 公允], the public discussion will reappoint him for another term. If not, he will be dismissed and replaced by someone else without even finishing his term. The customs are more honest and sincere [*dunhou* 敦厚] and simple [*jianpu* 儉樸], compared to England, but otherwise they are the same.¹⁸

These early Chinese writers, to which Wei Yuan 魏源 (1794–1857) will have to be added, drew largely on the introductions of US geography, history, and personalities in Chinese from the hands of missionaries.

In 1838, the American Protestant missionary Elijah Coleman Bridgman (Gao Liwen 高理文, 1801–1861) had published his *Meilige heshengguo zhiliu* 美利哥合省國志略 (Sketch of the United States of America). It contained some of the key concepts that recur in later Chinese writings. Bridgman is inserting his America into a world context of utopian harmony that was eventually shared by many late Qing reformers, ranging from the Taiping leader Hong Xiuquan 洪秀全 (1814–1864) to the early reformer Feng Guifen 馮桂芬 (1809–1874),

17 Lin Zexu 林則徐, “Yangshi zalu 洋事雜錄 [Miscellaneous notes on foreign affairs].” Originally recorded in 1846. Reprint of the transcript by Chen Depei 陳德培, ed. Lin Yongyu 林永侯 and Meng Pengxing 孟彭興 in *Zhongshan daxue xuebao* 中山大學學報 3 (1986): 28.

18 Lin Zexue, “Yangshi zalu,” 29.

from the journalist and writer Wang Tao 王韜 (1828–1897) to Kang Youwei 康有為 (1858–1927). Bridgman’s preface starts thus:

As all-under-heaven is basically one family and China is basically one person [in this family], the men in the entire universe are as limbs and flesh and skin and frame without exception part of it. In this sense all-under-heaven is like one human being with the different states each occupying one corner like the individual openings in the human body.¹⁹

This utopian world is also the proper context for George Washington. After “establishing its own statehood, the nation [the USA] gradually grew stronger and had peaceful relations with many different states.” The democratic process of electing Washington is then described together with his being recalled to scare away the French. “In Jiaqing 5 [1799–1800], Washington died. The citizens called him ‘father of the nation’ because of his working so hard for the country.”²⁰

The image of George Washington as the man who put all his energies into serving his country and was therefore appreciated by his countrymen as “father of the nation” puts him into a Western hierarchy that establishes a good parallel with the Chinese hierarchy with the *shengren*, the sage ruler at the top. If Bridgman was not trying to find Chinese categories for Washington, Gützlaff did. In 1837, Gützlaff serialized a novel under the innocent title “Lun” 論 (Essay) in his periodical *Dongxiyang kao meiyue tongji zhuan* 東西洋考每月統計傳 (East-west examiner and monthly recorder).²¹ A Mr. Wu from Jiangxi travels to Canton, where he becomes interested in the *huaqi* 花旗 (flower flag), flying over the American compound. A *tongshi* 通事 (interpreter), informs him about the origins of this state, sketching the motives of the first English settlers to get away from religious persecution, the settlement of the continent, the conflict with the Indian tribes, the waves of refugees from the impoverished classes of Europe, the increasing tax burdens imposed by England to finance its wars, the resentment among the settlers down to the Boston tea party, the support for the rebels from France, Holland, and Spain, and eventually the acceptance by Britain of American independence. Since that time, the Americans had pursued “liberal policies” (*kuan zheng* 寬政), selecting “men of worth” to run the country, opening up the rich lands with the effect that the “power and influence” of this state grew ever stronger. The story ends with a paean to Washington:

19 Elijah Coleman Bridgman (Gao Liwen 高理文), *Meilige heshengguo zhilüe* 美利哥合省國志略 [Sketch of the United States of America] (Singapore: Jianxia shuyuan 堅夏書院, 1838), 1.

20 Bridgman, *Meilige heshengguo zhilüe*, chaps. 5, 17.

21 Karl F. A. Gützlaff (Guo Shila 郭實獵), “Lun 論 [Essay],” *Dongxiyang kao meiyue tongji zhuan* 東西洋考每月統計傳 5 (1837): 3b.

The gentleman who guided them in raising this state is called Washington. This hero had the virtues of a Yao and Shun. He led the national military to attack the enemy, managed to make the citizens peaceful and content and exerted his heart and used all his powers to bring about the succor of his people. After he had secured the country and liberated the people, he did not abuse his powers, but returned to his village for a peaceful life.²²

This “interpreter” goes straight for the Chinese sages Yao and Shun to indicate to Mr. Wu the caliber of this Washington and assigned the merits of setting up this liberal, successful, and Christian state to Washington.

A short while later, Gützlaff’s journal published a piece outlining Washington’s words and deeds.²³ It starts: “Among the men with the talent to manage a state and bring benefits to his times, those whose benevolence and pure virtue spread all over, and the heroes who excel in both honesty and justice it is Washington who stands alone without comparison.” Brought up by his mother, he “was not above average in learning, but his talents in practical knowledge and experience were superb. He had exceptional courage and his heroism was far above others.” We hear the story about his service with the British and his deeds which went unrecognized by them while his own people wished to set him up as their leader against his will. When the rebellion against the “tyrannical rule” of the English erupted, they were looking for a leader.

They all knew that Washington was rousing in the beginning, but even more formidable in the final stage, that he kept to his purpose without fail, that he was resolute in making decisions, authoritative and stern in his expression, unbending and correct, deeply committed to ward off harm from the state, and would not complain even if it cost his life. The assembly of the crowd unanimously established him as commander-in-chief. Washington was utterly disinterested in the accolades of the people, but seriously pushed for the prosperity of the people, he did not crave for himself an official salary, calmly accepted honest poverty and never harmed others for his own benefit.

Now comes the story about the lack of weapons, ammunition, and logistical support, and the taking of the city. The British eventually gather a big army, and panic spread in Washington’s army, but he stands unflinching. In the stalemate, the elite of his own country want to dismiss him, but the “cheers

22 Gützlaff, “Lun,” 3b.

23 Karl F. A. Gützlaff (Ai Han zhe 愛漢者) et al., “Huashengdun yanxing zuilüe 華盛頓言行最略 [Digest of Washington’s words and deeds],” *Dongxiyang kao meiyue tongji zhuan* 東西洋考每月統記傳 1 (1838): 17a–18b.

from the common people looking to him for leadership fill the streets.” In this critical moment, the French came to help. Eventually, the English accept American independence. Washington resigns from office and “returns to his farm, takes care of his business and is not further engaged in politics. Although his powers were vast and his authority reverberated in the entire world, with all the powers in his hands, he only did what had to be done, serving the state above, and comforting the people below, exerting his heart full of honesty and truth was all he was concerned about day and night.” Eventually, because

the good people knew that Washington harbored great purpose in his breast and had excellent strategies in his belly, and therefore set him up as the president of the state. Although he would have preferred to withdraw and stay out of the public limelight, he gladly listened to the people’s voice, and in the eight years he was in office managed the state as easily as if he was playing with something in his hand. The political situation prospered, the people were doing well in all their activities, his fame spread far and wide through the generations.

The general judgment after his years in office was that he was “perfect both in civilian and military matters, that his fame had spread across the world, shining all around. Washington had entirely relied on God’s protection to successfully lead his great battles, plant virtue and set the foundations and get the work done to achieve the rise of this new people. The more prosperous and strong they became, the more they improved and progressed, the more they owed this to the virtuous contributions of Washington.”²⁴

The description of George Washington already consists of a number of standardized tropes. These had been developed in the early hagiographic writings in the US that became popular following Washington’s death and were widely circulated in tracts, biographies, and ceremonial speeches in the US early in the nineteenth century. Mason Locke Weems’s creative biography of Washington was published directly after his death with a title already saturated with tales of Washington’s selflessness and honesty. *A History of the Life and Death, Virtues and Exploits, of General George Washington* (1800), heavily reworked for its fifth edition (1806), and expanded greatly for its sixth edition as *The Life of George Washington, with Curious Anecdotes Laudable to Himself and Exemplary to his Countrymen* (1808) were instrumental in shaping this popular image for over a century, with over seventy editions

24 Gützlaff, “Huashengdun yanxing zuilie,” 17a–18b.

published.²⁵ While not without their critics,²⁶ the books were far from isolated examples.²⁷ Both Gützlauff and Bridgman drew on them, most likely via encyclopedias which in turn reproduced what had become a fairly stable national mythology by this time. The “father of the nation” epithet is a case in point. The epithet first seems to have come up in an illustration in a German language American illustration as early as 1779, where the angel of victory on top of the image has his image in hand and trumpets him as “Landes Vater [father of the land].”²⁸

The term goes back to the *pater patriae* epithet first given to Julius Caesar.²⁹ However, Washington himself did not associate his role with that of Julius Caesar even though he was appointed “dictator” at one moment, but

25 Mason Locke Weems, *A History of the Life and Death, Virtues and Exploits of General George Washington: Happily Calculated to Furnish a Feast of True Washingtonian Entertainment and Improvement, Both to Ourselves and Our Children* [First edition] (Baltimore: George Keatinge, 1800); Mason Locke Weems, *A History of the Life and Death, Virtues and Exploits of General George Washington: Faithfully Taken from Authentic Documents*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: John Bioren, 1800 × 1802); and Mason Locke Weems, *The Life of George Washington, with Curious Anecdotes Laudable to Himself and Exemplary to his Countrymen*, 6th ed. (Philadelphia: Matthew Carey, 1806). Posthumous editions (based on the ninth edition) recombined the previous titles, e.g. Mason Locke Weems, *A History of the Life and Death, Virtues and Exploits of General George Washington: With Curious Anecdotes Equally Honourable to Himself and Exemplary to His Young Countrymen*, Mount Vernon edition (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1918). On the textual and publication history of the book, see William S. Baker, “Washington after the Revolution, 1784–1799 (Continued),” *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 19, no. 3 (1895): 170–196, on 172 (to accompany the Washington’s diary entry recounting his meeting with Weems); Marcus Cunliffe, “Introduction,” in Mason Locke Weems, *The Life of Washington*, ed. Marcus Cunliffe (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962), xiii–xxii.

26 Many studies have dealt with Weems’s creative role in the development of the Washington myth, mostly in a highly critical manner, see Lawrence Counselman Wroth, *Parson Weems: A Biographical and Critical Study* (Baltimore: Eichelberger, 1911); Cunliffe, “Introduction,” 183–184; Marcus Cunliffe, “Parson Weems and George Washington’s Cherry Tree,” *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 45 (1962): 58–96; Sylvia Neely, “Mason Locke Weems’s ‘Life of George Washington’ and the Myth of Braddock’s Defeat,” *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 107, no. 1 (1999): 45–72, on 48.

27 For a useful overview, see Ron Chernow, *Washington: A Life* (New York: Penguin, 2010), 772–817. The definitive study is Barry Schwartz, *George Washington: The Making of an American Symbol* (New York: Free Press, 1987).

28 David Rittenhaus, ed., *Der Gantz Neue Verbesserte Nord-Americanische Calendar* (Lancaster, PA: Francis Bailey, 1779), frontispiece. Reprinted in Otto C. Lightner and Pearl Ann Reeder, “Back Number Magazines: A Rare 1779 Almanac,” *Hobbies—The Magazine for Collectors* 58, no. 9 (November 1953): 133.

29 Nicholas Purcell, “*Pater Patriae*, ‘Father of the Fatherland,’” *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Classics*, December 2015, accessed November 28, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780199381135.013.4775>. For a critical contextual discussion on the term, see Tom Stevenson, “Acceptance of the Title *Pater Patriae* in 2 BC,” *Antichthon* 43 (2009): 97–108, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0066477400001970>.

rather with Cincinnatus, the man who, according to legend and much later histories, was asked to lead the Roman army in a desperate situation in 458 BCE, accepted reluctantly, and promptly returned to his fields after he had secured success.³⁰ The “father of the nation” epithet continued to frequently appear after Washington’s death. The stature of Washington has remained above that of the other founding fathers, mostly because he is considered the founder of the nation and its liberty or sovereignty.³¹ In eighteenth-century medical thinking, the father is considered the sole creator of the offspring, the mother only providing the environment for the growth and development of what otherwise is a fully formed genetic package. In this sense, the “father of the nation” has created all the characteristics of the nation-to-be.

It should be remembered that Gützlaff was a Pietist from Pomerania.³² His willingness to reproduce the Washington myth for a Chinese readership demonstrates that Gützlaff himself had already been imbued with this myth from his upbringing in Germany, from where large numbers of his Pietist “brethren and sisters” had been leaving to find religious freedom and a prosperous environment in the United States, which was thriving due to the “virtuous contributions” of George Washington.

Creating the image

Washington was anything but a leader who disappeared into a ritual function. According to the standard heroic biography/hagiography, Washington was described as having had a strongly individualistic personality, a loathing of public pomp and accolades, and having not pushed for an official role.³³ Once he had accepted it, however, he would devote himself to it with utter selflessness and the superb skills of someone who is not a great savant, but a man unusually skilled in the practical matters of government, both civilian

30 This image had strong echoes in North America. The Society of the Cincinnati formed in 1783, with Washington elected its first president. The city of Cincinnati was founded by members of this society, which was suspected at the time of being a secret club like the Freemasons. See Garry Wills, *Cincinnatus: George Washington and the Enlightenment* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1984); Chernow, *Washington*, 448–458. On the Cincinnatus legend, see H. H. Scullard, *A History of the Roman World 753 to 146 BC*, 4th edition (London: Methuen, 1980), 88, 302, 307.

31 Weems, *A History of the Life, and Death, Virtues and Exploits of General George Washington* [First edition], 38, writes in 1800 that “This dearest and best of all appellations, ‘*The father of his country*’ was the precious fruit of that noble spirit of *benevolence* which he so carefully cultivated through every age and stage of his life.” This statement in the first edition was retained in slightly altered forms in all later editions.

32 Jessie G. Lutz, “The Legacy of Karl Friedrich August Gützlaff,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 24, no. 3 (July 2000): 123–128.

33 Weems, *Life of Washington*, ed. Cunliffe, 172–224; Chernow, *Washington*, xxii; Schwartz, *George Washington*.

and military. He was the embodiment of a dour Enlightenment rationality and morality. Once the work was done, he neither clung to power nor abused it as long as he had it. The people stand out as the silent heroes in this narrative because they selected such a man and stayed with him even in moments of defeat and frustration. His stern and authoritative mien was the full expression of his character. The people saw—and perhaps continue to see—his mien and know his actions, and both together contributed to the formation of their judgment about him. The election system set up in the US by Washington banks on this wisdom and validates it. Although both narratives were written by missionaries, Bridgman does not mention Washington's religious feelings and Gützlaff refers to his reliance on God only very briefly. Washington as a historical figure held what might be called a regular Enlightenment type of deist view, and refused communion. No minister of any denomination was called to his deathbed.³⁴ Washington was careful not to muddle up his Enlightenment image.

We see the standardization of the image of the dead leader in three areas: In his character, in his deeds, and in his outward expression. In the Chinese adaptations, we see Bridgman using the Western honorific of the “father of the nation,” which had long become part of the Washington myth, trusting that, although such a concept did not exist in China, it would be understandable from the context, especially as there was a Chinese metaphor for the officials who were to act as “fathers and mothers of the people.” Gützlaff was looking for a Chinese counterpart to explain this political leader. He had been familiarizing himself with the golden age of the Three Dynasties and had written historical outlines about them in Chinese for his journal. Within the Chinese *imaginaire*, the natural counterpart to explain the caliber of George Washington were the sages of Chinese antiquity, especially Yao 堯 and Shun 舜. Yao was an especially good fit, because he very explicitly did not make any of his sons his successor, but held a search for the most virtuous man to succeed him. He had seen this person in his dream, and drew a portrait of him to help the search. Although the sources do not mention the facial features of Shun as an indication of his personality, the pervasive practice in later periods in China of physiognomy may suggest that this might have been implied in this story. As we have seen, both the “father of the nation” idea and the idea of comparing Washington to the Chinese sages of antiquity were picked up by Chinese authors in the subsequent decades and they were to remain with this model of an ideal political leader.

Xu Jiyu and Gützlaff both refer to Washington's mien as an important indicator of his character. Xu explicitly said that he had seen Washington's

34 Schwartz, *George Washington*, 91–101.

portrait. Did they share a mental image of a standardized George Washington mien? How did this come about?

The image of George Washington had been present in southern Chinese ports since the first years of the nineteenth century, especially in Canton. There was a big market in the United States for portraits of the man who had died in 1799. Many communities in the US held commemorative services and set up lasting memorial spaces for the “father of the nation.” Many individuals wanted a portrait of the man for their home. Canton had for decades been a place where personalized ceramics and replicas of Western furniture could be bought at very competitive prices. It had also become a thriving market where one could have a portrait painted or a copy of a painting made. American collections such as the Rhode Island Historical Society or the Peabody Museum in Salem own Cantonese copies of Washington portraits from this time. The dimensions of this trade can be gathered from a note by the American consul in Canton, Edward Carrington, in his diary for the years 1804–1806. There, he writes that he bought in Canton “ten portraits of Washington” for the merchant William F. Magee.³⁵ Several of these oil paintings on glass have been attributed to the Chinese artist “Foeiqua.”³⁶ Altogether, this little note indicates a customized and nearly industrial manufacture of George Washington paintings—mostly behind glass—of a very fine quality in Canton at the time. The existence of quite a number of other copies of the same painting—these ones behind glass—in US collections suggests a market of fair dimensions.

Numerous copies were made of Gilbert Stuart’s 1796 portrait of Washington that was originally in the Boston Athenaeum by painters in the United States, Europe, and China (Fig. 5).³⁷ Stuart himself was instrumental in customizing this portrait by painting no less than seventy copies himself based on this unfinished original, which he personally kept.³⁸ No early print of this portrait is known, although Washington prints by Tiebout and Edwin

35 Quoted in Frank H. Goodyear, “Paintings at John Brown House,” in *Rhode Island History*, 31, nos. 2–3 (Spring and Summer 1972): 45–46.

36 The identification of the painter is by Carl L. Crossman, *The Decorative Arts of the China Trade: Paintings, Furnishings and Exotic Curiosities* (Woodbridge: Antique Collectors Club, 1991), 215. For an example of the series, see Unknown Artist, *George Washington (After Gilbert Stuart)*, oil on glass, 73.7 × 55.9 cm, New Haven: Mabel Brady Garvan Collection, Yale University of Art Gallery, accessed August 16, 2019, <https://artgallery.yale.edu/collections/objects/5480>.

37 Gilbert Stuart, *George Washington (The Athenaeum Portrait)*, 1796, oil on canvas, 121.9 × 94 cm, Washington DC: National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution; owned jointly with Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, accessed November 26, 2019, https://npg.si.edu/object/npg_NPG.80.115.

38 For example, see Gilbert Stuart, *President George Washington*, after 1796, oil on canvas, El Paso, TX: El Paso Museum of Art, <https://epma.art/art/collections/american>.

from the early nineteenth century do exist.³⁹ The Cantonese painters had in fact one of these Stuart copies right in Canton. Stuart went to court in an unsuccessful effort to secure his copyright to the portrait and prevent Cantonese copies from wrecking his market by being imported to the US.⁴⁰ Still, both Stuart himself and the Cantonese painters—together with a host of US and European copyists—were instrumental in making this portrait, without US government intervention, into the standardized image of this political leader. The Washington image on the US dollar bill today is still based on this portrait. While much has been written about how this portrait and its replicas expressed the indomitable character of the man, Stuart himself was less flattering. When Washington sat for him, he was obviously bored stiff by the chatter of the painter, who tried to interest and amuse him. Stuart writes about Washington that in the moment when he sat down for the painter, “an apathy seemed to seize him, and a vacuity spread over his countenance most appalling to paint.”⁴¹ A hard look at the original and the copies indicates a surprising coincidence between the painting and this appalling apathy. However, it was exactly this visible disinterest in power and public pomp that ended up as a key ingredient in Washington’s public image.

Chinese artists meticulously kept to this facial expression, as can be seen in Fig. 6. Copies of the *Athenaeum Portrait* were not the only Washingtoniana reproduced in Canton. Carrington also bought six oil paintings of copies of the *Apotheosis of Washington*. In addition, various collections hold copies behind glass.⁴² They are based on a print engraved by John James Barralet in 1802 on the basis of an earlier painting by him.⁴³

Barralet’s *Apotheosis of George Washington* (Fig. 7) is very much the painting counterpart to Weems’s biography. Washington is being carried to heaven by a winged old man (Father Time), guided upwards by a winged lady (Immortality), while Faith, Hope, and Charity are clustered on the left, Liberty with the emblematic cap on her pole and an American Indian share their grief in the foreground with, on their left, the America eagle

39 In January 2001, Sotheby’s offered an 1801 George Washington Print by Tiebout, engraving 56.5 × 37 cm. Tiebout’s print is mentioned in David McNeely Stauffer, *American Engravers Upon Copper and Steel* (New York: Grolier Club of the City of New York, 1907), 2:526, no. 3195; for Edwin’s prints, see 2:149–150, nos. 892–901.

40 James Thomas Flexner, *On Desperate Seas: A Biography of Gilbert Stuart* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1995), 143.

41 Flexner, *On Desperate Seas*, 124.

42 For example, Unidentified Chinese artist after John James Barralet, *Apotheosis of Washington*, 1802 × 1810, oil on glass, 71 × 52 cm, Terra Foundation for American Art, Chicago.

43 Phoebe Lloyd Jacobs, “John James Barralet and the Apotheosis of George Washington,” *Winterthur Portfolio* 12 (1977): 115–137.

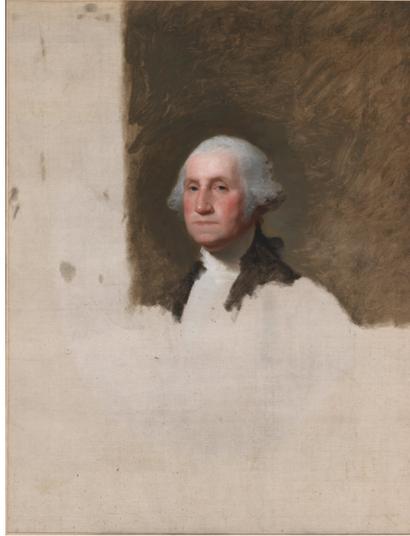


Fig. 5: *Gilbert Stuart, Portrait of George Washington (The Athenaeum Portrait), 1796, oil on canvas, 121.9 × 94 cm, Washington, DC: National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, NPG.80.115; owned jointly with Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (Wiki Commons, Google Art Project, Public Domain).*



Fig. 6: *Unattributed (possibly by Foeiqua), George Washington, reverse painting on glass, 74 × 56 cm, New Britain, CT: New Britain Museum of American Art (Wiki Commons, Public Domain, uploaded by user Daderot).*

securing watchfulness and power, and two rattlesnakes symbolize the rebellion of the former colonies.⁴⁴

The image of another eminent enlightenment figure had preceded that of George Washington even in its spread in the US and Europe, that of Benjamin Franklin. Prior to Baralett's engraving, Fragonard drew an apotheosis of Benjamin Franklin in 1778 (Fig. 8),⁴⁵ part of a wider trend for such depictions, with Robert Guillaume Dardel painting one for Voltaire in 1882, for example.⁴⁶ Friedrich Christoph Schlosser wrote in 1861 that

Franklin's appearance in the Parisian saloons, even before he appeared at the court or was allowed to carry on any negotiations except by the instrumentality of others, was a very important event for the whole of Europe. The admiration of Franklin in the saloons of Paris was pushed to the most absurd and exaggerated length, and produced an effect bordering almost on the miraculous. His style of dress, the simplicity of his external appearance, combined with his characteristic placidity and mildness, as well as with that apparent humility learned in the schools of the quakers, procured crowds of friends and partisans of freedom among courtiers who would have been shocked and terrified by coarseness of manners and bold and naked truths. Such was the number of portraits, busts, and medallions of him in circulation before he left Paris that he would have been recognized from them by any adult citizen in any part of the civilized world.⁴⁷

Franklin himself wrote to his daughter:

The clay medallion of me you say you gave to Mr. Hopkinson was the first of the kind made in France. A variety of others have been made since of different sizes; some to be set in the lids of snuff-boxes, and some so small as to be worn in rings; and the number sold is incredible. These with the pictures, busts, and prints (of which copies upon copies are spread everywhere) have made your father's face as well known as that of the moon, so that he durst not do

44 Jacobs, "Apotheosis," 115.

45 Reproduced in Jacobs, "Apotheosis," 127.

46 Jacobs, "Apotheosis," 128–130; Robert Guillaume Dardel and Pierre-François Le Grand, *L'Apothéose de Voltaire* [The Apotheosis of Voltaire], 1782, color stipple etching with watercolor on cream woven paper sheet, 30 × 35 cm, National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC. Considering that Dardel's work on the piece was dated 1778 in the inscription, with Le Grand's 1782, it may be that the engraving dates to the same year as Franklin's.

47 Friedrich Christoph Schlosser, *History of the Eighteenth Century and of the Nineteenth till the Overthrow of the French Empire*, trans. D. Davidson. (London: Chapman and Hall, 1845), 5:182.

anything that would oblige him to run away, as his phiz would discover him, whenever he would venture to show it.⁴⁸

The heavens became quite crowded with these Enlightenment figures. The emblem of the intertwined snakes was also on Washington's China that was given to him in 1796 by the East India Company.⁴⁹



Fig. 7: John James Barralet, *Apotheosis of George Washington, 1802, engraving and etching, 61.2 × 47 cm* New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art <http://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/365795>, (Wiki Commons, CC-Zero, uploaded by The Metropolitan Museum).

48 Benjamin Franklin, "DCCCV [Letter] To Mrs. Sarah Bach, Passy, 3 June 1778," in *The Works of Benjamin Franklin, Including the Private as Well as the Official and Scientific Correspondence, Together with the Unmutilated and Correct Version of the Autobiography, Vol. VIII: Letters and Misc. Writings 1779–1781*. 11/29/2019, ed. John Bigelow (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1904), 98–102. Also quoted in Schlosser, *History*, 5:198, unnumbered footnote.

49 George Washington Foundation, "Washington 'States' China," accessed October 1, 2019, http://www.kenmore.org/collections/ceramics/states_china.html.



Fig. 8: Marguerite Gérard print of drawing by Jean-Honoré Fragonard, *Eripuit Coelo Fulmen Sceptrumque Tirannis or Au Genie du Franklin, known in English as the Apotheosis of Franklin*, 1800 × 1802, 61.2 × 47 cm, New York: The Metropolitan Museum, <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/365795> (Wiki Commons, CC-Zero, uploaded by The Metropolitan Museum).

As Carrington's entry on his Canton purchase is before 1805, we can see the speed with which this international market operated.⁵⁰ It might be noted that Washington again does not look honored or amused, the expression on the face is taken from the Stuart portrait series.⁵¹

Barralet served as an important inspiration to Constantino Brumidi's 1865 fresco of the apotheosis of Washington in the cupola of the Capitol in Washington that surrounds him with all the glories of the United States (Fig. 9). All its artistic helplessness and blunt kitsch notwithstanding, Washington's apotheosis marks an important turning point in his image. It signals the final separation of his hallowed image from the frailties of the real

50 Crossman, *The Decorative Arts of the China Trade*, 215.

51 For examples, see Unnamed Chinese Artist: *Apotheosis of Washington* after John James Barralet, 1802 × 1810, oil on glass, 71.1 × 51.8 cm, Chicago: Terra Foundation for American Art; Unnamed Chinese Artist after John James Barralet, *Apotheosis, Sacred to the Memory of Washington*, ca. 1802, reverse oil on glass painting, Salem: Peabody Essex Museum, available at MIT Visualizing Cultures, photographed 2017, accessed August 1, 2019, https://visualizingcultures.mit.edu/rise_fall_canton_04/gallery_people/pages/cwPT_1082c_AE81885_Apoth.htm.



Fig. 9: Constantino Brumidi, Apotheosis of George Washington, 1865, fresco, Washington, DC: cupola of the Capitol Building (Wiki Commons, copyright US Government).

man and the elevation of Washington into the transnational and transcultural Olympus of political sageliness.

“The very beginning of the 19th century saw a mania of Washingtoniana,” writes Carl Crossmann.⁵² Cantonese artists and merchants made the best of this market, with Washington appearing on Cantonese oil paintings, behind-glass paintings, prints, vases, screens, and snuff bottles. The stories and histories about this remarkable man fleshed out the portrait, and the portrait served to illustrate the character of this figure.

Xu Jiyu, who was serving in Fujian province in the early

⁵² Crossman, *The Decorative Arts of the China Trade*, 215.

nineteenth century and who had close contact with missionaries in Xiamen and Ningbo, had seen both the image and the stories. The man Washington corresponded to the *imaginaire* of the sage, but with his victory over the English, his introduction of the institutions of selecting the virtuous, and the ensuing prosperity and peacefulness of his country he provided both a critical counter-text to both the English and the Qing courts. Shortly after the publication of the *Yinghuan zhilüe*, which went on to become the most important reference work for any Chinese people interested in the modern world, Xu was sacked from his office in 1851. Among foreigners, the story went around that he had been sacked because of an all too friendly depiction of barbarians such as Washington. It seems that Zeng Guofan 曾國藩 (1811–1872), who admired Xu’s genius, was instrumental in his dismissal, acting upon charges that he had “all too much aggrandized the English [-speaking] foreigners,” a depiction which “in its lack of balance had done damage to the Chinese political system.”⁵³ Xu was reinstated only in 1865 after the establishment of the Zongli Yamen, which was to take on the duties of a foreign office, and then was put in charge of the language training program of this new institution, the School of Combined Learning (*Tongwenguan* 同文館).

In the meantime, however, Xu’s acclaim for George Washington had caught the eye of Ningbo missionaries. At the time, the Washington Monument was being built in what today is the National Mall. Altogether, 193 commemorative stones were inserted into the building with inscriptions readable for those who go up the circular staircase inside the obelisk.⁵⁴ The Xiamen missionary Pratt, who knew about the ongoing building as well as the inscriptions, translated the most significant passage from Xu’s work about Washington, and sent it from Ningbo to Washington in 1853 to be

53 For these charges, see Zeng Guofan 曾國藩, “Zhi Zuo Jigao 致左季高 [Letter to Zuo Jigao (Zongtang)],” in *Zeng Guofan quanji* 曾國藩全集 [The complete works of Zeng Guofan], *Shuxin* 書信 [Letters] 1 (Changsha: Yuelu shushe, 1992), 622; and Li Ciming 李慈銘, *Yuemantang dushu biji* 越縷堂讀書筆記 [Reading notes from the Exceedingly Plain Studio] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1963), 480–481.

54 Judith M. Jacob, *The Washington Monument: A Technical History and Catalog of the Commemorative Stones* (Washington, DC: National Park Service, 2005), 158. Jacob quotes a letter by Daniel Jerome MacGowan (1814–1893) to John Carroll Brent dated February 22, 1865, obviously referring to the as yet to be installed commemorative slab, in which he says “I have already had the honor of sending a contribution towards your noble and pious object, in the form of a block of carved granite, which at my suggestion and with my assistance the Chinese Christians attached to the American Mission in Ningpo caused to be prepared. It was accompanied by a translation, which is a eulogy on the illustrious Washington by a scholar and minister of state who is distinguished among the statesmen of China.”

integrated into this monument to the “father of the nation” (Fig. 10).⁵⁵ It was eventually installed in 1885 and can today be found on the twentieth landing at 67 m in height, inscribed in Chinese accompanied by a contemporary translation.



Fig. 10: *Washington Monument Commemorative Stone with Chinese text by Xu Jiyu. Sent from Ningbo in 1853, installed on twentieth landing (67m) in 1885 (Wiki Commons, US Park Service).*

Shortened translation:

SU-KU-YU, BY IMPERIAL APPOINTMENT, LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR OF THE PROVINCE OF FUH KUN, IN HIS UNIVERSAL GEOGRAPHY, SAYS: “IT IS EVIDENT THAT WASHINGTON WAS A REMARKABLE MAN. IN DEVISING PLANS HE WAS MORE DECIDED THAN CHIN-SING OR WU-KANG; IN WINNING A COUNTRY, HE WAS BRAVER THAN TSAU-TSAU OR LIN PI [...] AMONG THE PEOPLE OF THE GREAT WEST, CAN ANY ONE MAN, IN ANCIENT

55 Fang Wen 方聞, *Qing Xu Songkan xiansheng Jiyu nianpu* 清徐松龕先生繼畚年譜 [Annalistic biography of the Qing (scholar) Mr. Xu Songkan aka Jiyu] (Taipei: Taiwan Shangwu yinshuguan, 1981).

OR MODERN TIMES, FAIL TO PRONOUNCE WASHINGTON PEERLESS?" THIS STONE IS PRESENTED BY A COMPANY OF GOOD CHRISTIANS AND ENGRAVED AT NINGPO, IN THE PROVINCE OF CHE HEANG, CHINA, THIS THIRD YEAR OF THE REIGN OF THE EMPEROR HE-EN FUNG, SIXTH MONTH AND SEVENTH DAY (July 12, 1853).⁵⁶

The Chinese Christians associated with the Ningbo Mission thus joined states, cities, companies, and societal organizations—including a very fair number of Masonic lodges—that had submitted dedicatory slabs. From outside the US, the other slabs were from Japan, the Greek islands of Paros and Naxos, Turkey, Bremen, Brazil, Siam, Greece, Switzerland, Wales, and the citizens of the United States in Foochow Foo.⁵⁷ The monument is an effort to commemorate a man of worldwide importance, although no systematic government effort in this direction is visible.

Once Xu Jiyu was reinstated, however, Anson Burlingame, the American minister in Beijing 1861–1867, moved. His last act in his office before he became the first Chinese ambassador to the US in 1867 was to honor Xu. Burlingame applied to Secretary of State Seward and President Johnson to have a copy of Stuart's Washington painted (it was done by William Pratt of Boston, known for his painting of state buildings) so that he could offer this as an official present from the United States to Xu Jiyu.⁵⁸ The Washington portrait now moved from being the informal standard picture of Washington to being a state-sponsored picture. In an elaborate ceremony with the entire leadership of the Zongli Yamen present, Burlingame handed over this official present together with an address which easily counts among the most enlightened US statements on US–Chinese relations to this date.

The core ingredients of the American myth and the Washington image became part of the Chinese *imaginaire*. Numerous references to Washington as on par with the Chinese sage kings of antiquity and as father of the nation can be found. Jiang Dunfu 蔣敦復, who cooperated with the missionaries, published in 1858 biographies of two “exceptional foreigners”

56 Translated by Peter Parker, 1862. See Fred Drake, *China Charts the World: Hsu Chi-yü and his Geography of 1848* (Cambridge, MA: East Asian Research Center, Harvard University, 1975), 243, note 66. See also Frederick Loviad Harvey, *History of the Washington National Monument and of the Washington National Monument Society* (Washington, DC: Norman T. Elliot, 1902), 128–129; Jacob, *The Washington Monument*, 158.

57 Catalogued in Jacob, *The Washington Monument*, 18–220. See also Harvey, *History of the Washington National Monument*, 125–129.

58 See William J. Haas, *China Voyager: Gist Gee's Life in Science* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1996), 69.

(*haiwai yiren* 海外異人), namely Julius Caesar and George Washington.⁵⁹ While he used the epithet “father of the nation” only for Caesar, his lively and enthusiastic writing about Washington greatly enhanced the dry historical record, even if it did not quite follow the hagiographic trend of Weems. Washington, he wrote, after securing independence “solemnly took leave from the masses, renounced military authority, and returned to his fields.”⁶⁰ However, the people wanted to have nothing of it. “The heads of the different states, all the military and the common people [however] said: ‘The merits of you great prince have been majestic and we all wish to elevate you to be the lord of our country’.” In a largely invented but wonderful speech Washington then “gave a great warning to the crowd, saying: ‘To be in charge of a state and then handing it on to one’s sons and grandsons is egotism. To be in power and holding onto it for too long is the foundation of chaos’.” Then he set up the state structure of elected representation. He eventually formulated a last rule, that also is nicely invented: “From now on, if there is someone who is after profit and forgets about righteousness, sucks the fat off the people and wrecks people’s lives, he will be collectively executed by our people without pardon” From that moment on, people were in harmony, harvests were plentiful, he transformed their lives, and their customs were improved.⁶¹ We find Washington eulogized in a biography in the *Wanguo gongbao* in May 1879 “as superior both in military and civilian affairs” and on par with the sages Yao and Shun of Chinese antiquity.⁶² Washington’s likeness is also often reproduced in China. One example is *Wanguo tongshi xubian* 萬國通史續編 (A sequel to the composite history of the world), a translation completed with the help of John Lambert Rees.⁶³

After the bitter experiences following the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, Liang Qichao 梁啟超 (1873–1929) felt awkward when he read Xu’s encomium of George Washington in 1890.⁶⁴ Huang Zunxian 黃遵憲 (1848–1905) held the hallowed image of Washington against the poor treatment of Chinese immigrants at the time of the Act and the abysmal politicking characteristic

59 Jiang Dunfu 蔣敦復, “Haiwan yiren zhuan: Gaisa 海外異人傳: 該撒 [Biographies of exceptional foreigners: Caesar],” *Liuhe congtan* 六合叢談 2 (1858): 7a–b.

60 Jiang Dunfu, “Haiwan yiren zhuan: Gaisa,” 7b.

61 Quoted in Pan Guangzhe, *Huashengdun zai Zhongguo*, 32.

62 Quoted in Pan Guangzhe, *Huashengdun zai Zhongguo*, 43.

63 John Lambert Rees (Lisi Lunbo Yuehan 李思倫白約翰), *Wanguo tongshi xubian* 萬國通史續編 [A sequel to the composite history of the world], trans. Cai Erkang 蔡爾康 (Shanghai: Guangxuehui, 1904).

64 Liang Qichao 梁啟超, “Sanshi zishu 三十自述 [Autobiography at 30],” 1902, in *Liang Qichao quanji* 梁啟超全集 [Complete works of Liang Qichao] (Beijing: Beijing chubanshe, 1999), 957.

of the 1884 presidential election in the US while serving as consul general in San Francisco 1882–1889.⁶⁵

George Washington is not the only political leader whose image was presented in China during the nineteenth century, and the juxtaposition with other such illustrations brings out an important difference. Queen Victoria could also be found, sometimes set in a court environment with Prince Albert.⁶⁶ These images are again emulating what had become a standardized image of the queen, namely George Hayter's portraits.⁶⁷

Hayter had painted the young queen to her great liking, and had been made Principal Painter-in-Ordinary of the Queen in 1841 (Fig. 11).⁶⁸ Copies or prints of this painting were in many official places. An example of relevance for China is the Cornwallis, the ship on which the Nanjing Treaty was signed in 1842. In the middle of the front wall of the state cabin of this ship where the negotiations took place was a portrait of Queen Victoria, and the three Chinese negotiators were said to have bowed respectfully to it (Fig. 12).⁶⁹ A Chinese copy based on this painting survives.

A gouache from about 1861 in a private collection shows the state room of the British delegation in Peking with a large copy of Hayter's State Portrait on the wall, something also referenced in contemporary letters.⁷⁰ The familiarity of even common British officers with these images was strong enough to allow

65 Huang's poems are quoted in Wong, "The Transformation of Culture," 210–211.

66 See the gouaches on Chinese paper from a private collection, ca. 1840, published in Patrick Connor, "Western Themes in Chinese Designs," *Antiques* (March 2004): 100, 102. The public display of the ruler's image in pageant, or ceremony in England goes back to the Tudors who tried to bolster their contested legitimacy in this manner, see Richard Rex, *The Tudors* (Stroud: NPI Media Group, 2003); Kevin Sharpe, *Selling the Tudor Monarchy: Authority and Image in Sixteenth-Century England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017).

67 For an example, George Hayter, *State Portrait of Queen Victoria*, 1838 × 1840, oil on canvas, 128 × 103 cm, Edinburgh: Royal Dining Room, Palace of Holyroodhouse, accessed August 11, 2019, <https://www.rct.uk/collection/401213/queen-victoria-1819-1901>. On the series in general, see Richard Ormond, *Early Victorian Portraits* (London: Stationery Office Books, 1974); Oliver Millar, *The Victorian Pictures: The Pictures in the Collection of Her Majesty the Queen*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

68 Henry Miller, *Politics Personified: Portraiture, Caricature and Visual Culture in Britain, c. 1830–1880* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015), 129.

69 Reproduced in Patrick Connor, "Western Themes in Chinese Design," *The Magazine Antiques* (1971) 165, no. 3, 106. A zoomable high-resolution version of the image has been made available by the Royal Collection Trust here: <https://www.rct.uk/collection/751141-a/the-signing-and-sealing-of-the-treaty-of-nanking-29-august-1842>.

70 Stephen Markbreiter, "In Search of an Identity: The British Legation at Peking, 1861," *Arts of Asia* (May–June 1983): 120–144; J. E. Hoare, *Embassies in the East: The Story of the British and Their Embassies in China, Japan and Korea from 1859 to the Present* (London: Curzon Press, 1999), 20–21.

one of them to draw pictures of Victoria and court ceremonies from memory when he was taken prisoner in China. These images in their turn found enough interest in China to be copied.⁷¹ Once lithographic reproduction of images was started by the *Shenbaoguan* 申報館 in 1878, the image of the queen was one of the first to be reproduced. Major had originally planned an illustrated journal with reproductions of topics of Chinese interest from the *London Illustrated News* and the *Graphic*. In the second issue of the *Yinghuan huabao* 瀛寰畫報 we find a portrait of Queen Victoria.⁷²

The practice of having a copy or eventually a copper reproduction of the ruler's image in diplomatic venues and administrative office has been well established in Europe since the seventeenth century, to the stark contrast



Fig. 11: *George Hayter, State Portrait of Queen Victoria, 1838 × 1840, oil on canvas, 128 × 103 cm, Edinburgh: Royal Dining Room, Palace of Holyroodhouse, catalogue no. RCIN 401213, <https://www.rct.uk/collection/401213/queen-victoria-1819-1901> (Wiki Commons, public domain). Official visual presence with emblems of authority.*

71 The officer has been identified as Anstruther by Connor, who also reproduces a number of illustrations based on his drawings. Connor, “Western themes,” plates I and IV.

72 Zhang Hongxing, “Disappearing Print-Makers: Ernest Major’s Illustrated Magazine in Shanghai in 1870s–1880s,” unpubl. MS, London 1996. I am grateful to Dr. Zhang for having made this paper accessible to me. It seems that this image has by now been stolen from the only surviving copy of this journal in the Shanghai library.



Fig. 12: The Signing and Sealing of the Treaty of Nanking on Board HMS Cornwallis, 29 September 1842, by John Burnet (1784–1868). After a drawing by Captain John Platt, published by Francis Moon, April 20, 1844, engraving, 47.1 × 87.9 cm, London: F. G. Moon, stored at the Foreign & Commonwealth Office (Wiki Commons, public domain). A portrait of Queen Victoria hangs above the signatories in the cabin of HMS Cornwallis. National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, England.

with China, where no such publicly accessible images were to be found.⁷³ They served as a visual reminder of the monarch in whose stead the official was officiating, and sometimes to quickly make a new ruler known in a country which he or she had inherited by succession.

The image of George Washington is radically different from that of Queen Victoria. George Washington was dead and his image did not serve as a stand-in for the actual living ruler of the country, but as a visual representation of the foundations upon which the nation was built. His appearance without any pomp and ceremony in the sober, somewhat sour look of a rational and controlled devotion to the interests of the country and the people comes as a lively counterpoise to the images of rulers such as Queen Victoria with her inherited throne and all formal regalia. The textual matter of Washington resonating with his portrait again replicates this difference. While in notes on Queen Victoria one will find references to her youth and the power of the country she represented, there is nothing of the adulation of the character and

⁷³ I am grateful to Dr. Susan Richter and Prof. Vera Nünning, both colleagues in the “Asia and Europe” Cluster in Heidelberg, for providing me with relevant information. Already in 1590, an edict mandated that portraits of Queen Elizabeth of England had to show her as a young virgin. In ceremonial handbooks of the early eighteenth century, such as Johann Christian Lünig’s *Theatrum ceremoniale historico politicum* (1719–1720) this practice is already well-established. See Friedrich Polleroß, “Des abwesenden Prinzen Porträt: Zeremoniell-darstellung im Bildnis und Bildnisgebrauch im Zeremoniell,” in *Zeremoniell als höfische Ästhetik in Spätmittelalter und Früher Neuzeit*, ed. Jörg Jochen Berns, and Thomas Rahn (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1995), 382–409; Peter Burke, *The Fabrication of Louis XIV* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992); Jutta Schumann, *Die andere Sonne: Kaiserbild und Medienstrategien im Zeitalter Leopolds I* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 2003).

historical role of Washington. She was the head of state of a powerful nation, and her image in official British venues endowed the local representatives with the symbolic authority to act in her name. Washington, conversely, is not the living US president, but a standard and model for a modern enlightened political leader.

The notion of having one's likeness in the public spread greatly with the advent of photography and the increasing exposure of Chinese officials to such images. The practice of having a personal photograph reproduced to spread one's image was pioneered in China by the Shanghai courtesans, who distributed them among their patrons. The idea had come from France where the grand courtesans of the Second Empire had their photography on the visiting cards since this process had been invented in 1854.⁷⁴

As much as the Shanghai courtesans were operating in the International Settlement of Shanghai, the first images of Chinese public men seem to have been associated with foreign countries. The first Chinese ambassador to London, Guo Songtao 郭嵩燾 (1818–1891), had his portrait painted there by Walter Goodman in 1878,⁷⁵ and it was exhibited in the Royal Academy, quite apart from Guo being lampooned by *Vanity Fair*.⁷⁶ He also had a photo taken that was subsequently published.⁷⁷

The transition to this form of publicity was not smooth. Guo Songtao was so appalled at the public chatter of his portraitist Goodman concerning the circumstances of the painting—especially because some of it had filtered back to China—that he returned the portrait and asked for his money back. Goodman recalled a decade later that he had “informed His Excellency *if it was against the customs of his country for a mandarin to have his portrait painted, it was not less at variance with the rigid rules of the*

74 The 39th Rencontres d'Arles in 2008 had some fifty of these visiting cards with photographs on exhibit, from the collection of Philippe and Marion Jacquier in Paris. See Mary Blume, “Les Insoumisés, France’s Rebellious Female Courtesans,” *International Herald Tribune*, August 20, 2008, accessed May 4, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/21/arts/21iht-blume.4.15473555.html>.

75 See Rudolf Wagner, “The *Shenbao* in Crisis: The International Environment and the Conflict between Guo Songtao and the *Shenbao*,” *Late Imperial China* 20, no. 1 (June 1999): 107–138, on 116–120.

76 Leslie Ward, “Statesman [Kuo Sun-tao],” *Vanity Fair*, no. 255 (June 16, 1877): unpaginated.

77 Samuel Lock and George Whitfield, *Kuo Sung-tao*, 1880, oval woodburytype print on album page mount, 11.5 × 9.2 cm, London: National Portrait Gallery, Photographs Collection, Catalogue number Ax17602, published by Sampson Low, Marston, Searle, and Rivington.

outer barbarian to return money.”⁷⁸ The public exhibition of a portrait of a Chinese dignitary abroad seems to have been part of the criticism levelled against Guo Songtao at home. A tea party organized by Guo was very successful, with even Prime Minister Gladstone showing up, but as he received the guests together with his wife, it was another controversial public performance.⁷⁹ It seems as if the Chinese ambassadors abroad were to act as the extension of the Beijing court even in the sense of emulating the ban on visual contact and public access to the physical features of the ruler that prevailed in China.

From the available record it is quite evident that many, including the Empress Dowager Cixi herself, were making ample use of the new medium. A most important platform to gain image recognition was provided once the *Dianshizhai huabao* 點石齋畫報 (*Dianshizhai Pictorial*, *DSZHB*) came out in 1884. In the West, the illustrated papers had already been doing this already since the 1840s. The *DSZHB* provided two kinds of platforms: one in the regular illustrations, the other in the form of glue-ins that could be taken out and unfolded. Some of them were rather large. I am not sure whether they were in fact taken out to be glued to the wall, which would of course have given maximum exposure to the personality in question, and also would have indicated a personal preference of the persons living there.

I have located such pictures in the *Dianshizhai Pictorial* for Zeng Jize 曾紀澤 (1839–1890), Zeng Guoquan 曾國荃 (1824–1890), and Li Hongzhang 李鴻章 (1823–1901). The selection indicates that only people associated with the Yangwu current were going for this modernistic enterprise. The Zeng Guoquan image (Fig. 13) was a glue-in drawn by Wu Youru 吳友如 (d. 1893?).⁸⁰ Interestingly enough, the drawing of Zeng Jize (Fig. 14) was based on the portrait of him in the *Illustrated London News* (Fig. 15), which in its turn was based on a photograph for which this successor of Guo Songtao as ambassador in London had sat with an English photographer.

78 Walter Goodman, “People I Have Painted,” *Sala’s Journal* (March 4, 1893): 199–200. On the orders of the Chinese ambassador in Berlin, Liu Xihong, Goodman had copied in 1878 Giovanni Battista Salvi da Sassoferrato’s *Madonna in Prayer*, in the National Gallery in London, and was to paint Guo Songtao’s wife with their child in eighteen sittings (!) in the following year. Sadly, I have not been able to locate either one of the Goodman paintings.

79 Wagner, “Shenbao in Crisis,” 120.

80 Rudolf G. Wagner, “Joining the Global *Imaginaire*: The Shanghai Illustrated Journal *Dianshizhai Huabao*,” in *Joining the Global Public: Word, Image and City in Early Chinese Newspapers, 1870–1910*, ed. Rudolf Wagner (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007), 105–174, on 149.



Fig. 13: Wu Youru 吳友如, Portrait of Zeng Guoquan, lithograph, *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, Jia 20, May 27, 1884.



Fig. 14: Wu Youru 吳友如, Portrait of Zeng Jize, lithograph, *DSZHB*, Jia 20, May 27, 1884.

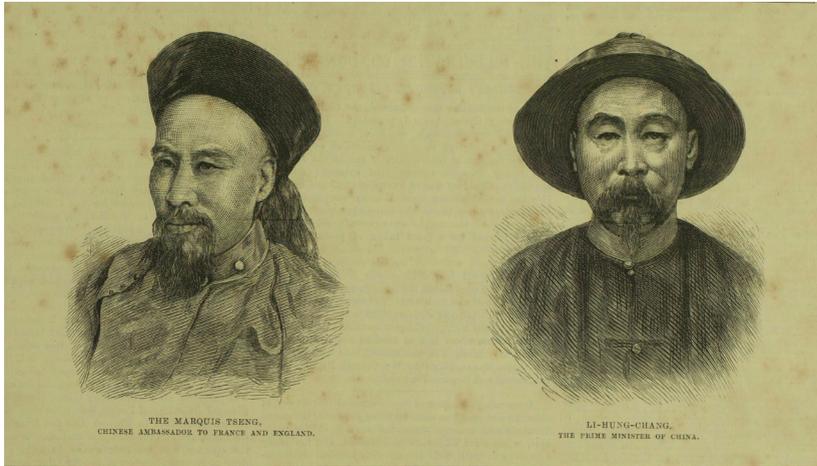


Fig. 15: Unnamed Artist, “Portrait of Zeng Jize,” *Illustrated London News* 84, no. 2333 (January 5, 1884), 1. Zeng is on the left with Li Hongzhang to his right.

The *Dianshizhao huabao* was located at an interesting crossing point in the portraiture of political leaders. The main contributor Wu Youru had a great interest and skill in the illustration of battles. As a consequence, Zeng Jize suggested his name to Li Hongzhang in 1886 for a commission from Empress Dowager Cixi. Cixi wanted to celebrate her “victory” over the French in 1884–1885 by having celebratory paintings made of the key figures and scenes for the Purple Effulgence Pavilion in the Forbidden City. In this hall were exhibited portraits of model officials, both military and civilian. I am not entirely clear about who had access. I assume it was accessible to high officials, and it is definite that they were not accessible for the general public. Given the presence in high positions at court of a number of officials, such as Li Hongzhang and Zeng Jize, who had been instrumental in the eventual Qing success in suppressing the Taiping Rebellion (1850–1864), it was impressed upon the Empress Dowager that it would be impolitic to have a celebration of her own little war, and forget about the merits of the men who had saved the dynasty two decades before. Wu Youru proceeded to Beijing and painted sixteen large drafts of key Taiping battle scenes together with the portraits of the key commanders. These drafts were to be transferred on silk by a specialized military contingent under the banner painter Qingkuan 慶寬 (1849–1927). Wu Youru always claimed that his paintings had found favor with the Empress Dowager, but

the Taiping paintings in the Purple Effulgence Pavilion were not visibly based on his drawings.⁸¹

The practice of exhibiting portraits of model officials within the court goes back to the Han dynasty. The Western Han court set up a hall with such portraits for officials to emulate. The catalogue of the Imperial Library of the Western Han even lists a work introducing the principal disciples of Confucius with their portraits.⁸² Zhang Hongxing has followed the history of especially the military paintings. By the early Qing, emperors would hire French illustrators specialized in battle scenes to paint their own exploits, but again the resulting prints seem to have been as much kept inside the court precincts as the portraits of Qing emperors from hands such as those of Castiglione.⁸³ Wu Youru was clearly familiar with this tradition, just as he was with the illustrated Chinese newsheets sold in the markets. The decisive moment, however, came when Wu returned to Shanghai. He sold his Beijing drawings to the *Dianshizhai huabao* for reproduction, and the journal ran a long series of glue-ins with these battle scenes and the key commanders.

The wall separating the court and the public was suddenly transparent, and things commissioned by the court as official commemorations were turning up in the houses of *Dianshizhai huabao* subscribers and buyers. Given the very large multiplication factor of this journal, which was inserted into the national distribution network of the *Shenbao* and continued to be sold and resold for many years, the publicity effect this exposure had for the public recognition and appreciation of high officials was impressive, especially as these officials were not just presented as generic characters, but as key actors with grand programs and great achievements. Nothing is known of any objection by either of the two sponsors of Wu Youru's commission against his making his court drawings public. Through publication in the *Dianshizhai huabao*, the exploits of the Han Chinese generals in their battles against the Taipings in defense of the Manchu dynasty entered the public imaginary and their claim for an important role in the polity was enhanced accordingly. Wu Youru had, quite accurately, shown the merits of Han-Chinese rather than Manchu generals and troops in battling the Taipings. This had not gone down too

81 The following information is based on Zhang Hongxing, "Wu Youru's 'The Victory over the Taiping': Painting and Censorship in 1886 China," doctoral diss., London: School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 1999), 210.

82 Wagner, "Joining the Global *Imaginaire*," 150.

83 See Hiromitsu Kobayashi, "Suzhou Prints and Western Perspectives: The Painting Techniques of Jesuit Artists at the Qing Court, and Dissemination of the Contemporary Court Style of Painting to Mid-Eighteenth-Century Chinese Society through Woodblock Prints," in *The Jesuits II: Cultures, Sciences, and the Arts, 1540–1773*, ed. Thomas Frank Kennedy, Steven J. Harris, Gauvin Alexander Bailey, and John W. O'Malley (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), 268–269.

well with the Manchu court. The battle for the public image of the political leader had commenced. And it was a transcultural battle from the very outset. During the following decades, we see an increasing number of Chinese leadership figures, above all Li Hongzhang himself, having themselves photographed and permitting these photographs to be used in foreign-language books especially.⁸⁴ The habit of having oneself photographed with foreign leaders also began to spread. Again Li Hongzhang set the tone.⁸⁵

As there had been persistent rumors since the 1870s that Li might be tempted to make a coup against the dynasty—Gordon even offered his services in the event in 1880⁸⁶—his willingness to increase his public visibility through images and interviews was well understood outside of China as being part of this potential challenge. In 1904, a commercial outlet in Shanghai publicized, seemingly with permission, photographs of Cixi and the Guangxu Emperor; Cixi had at least two portraits painted by Westerners sent to international exhibitions, and in 1904 she asked a visiting German prince to bring her photographic portrait to his mother.⁸⁷ She was actively engaging in the image trading among ruling houses.

The perceived crisis in China at the time and the idealizing features associated with the Chinese image of George Washington created a particular asymmetry between real flesh-and-blood Chinese candidates for the slot of the political leader and the oversized model into which they would have to fit. This was not yet true for Li Hongzhang and other high Qing officials because they were confident that they qualified as responsible state leaders under a well-established monarchy. Their self-assessment, however, was not necessarily shared by many late Qing writers and much less so by those who set themselves up as candidates for bringing about an utterly new China. They tended to dismiss in a wholesale attack all those who had undergone a traditional education and tried to handle the present with clumsily adapted prescriptions. The models invoked by critics since the 1850s were the institutions of the Chinese golden age when the kings were sages. Since Confucius, there had not been a single such sage, and all the critics felt

84 Quite a few such portrait photographs are found in Mrs. Archibald Little, *Li Hung-chang: His Life and Times* (London: Cassell, 1903).

85 An example might be his photograph together with Lord Salisbury and Lord Curzon in William Francis Mannix ed., *Memoirs of Li Hung Chang* (London: Houghton Mifflin, 1913).

86 See Richard J. Smith, “Li Hongzhang’s Use of Foreign Military Talent: The Formative Period, 1862–1874,” in *Li Hung-chang and China’s Early Modernization*, ed. Samuel Chu and Kwang-Ching Liu (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1994), 119–144.

87 See Wu Hung, *Remaking Beijing: Tiananmen Square and the Creation of a Political Space* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 251–252, notes 38–41.

they could do was to prepare the ground for a *housheng* 後聖, a “sage to come” very much in the manner in which the Protestant missionaries were preparing the ground for the Second Coming.⁸⁸

In the hagiographic tilt of Washington’s North American and then Chinese-language biographies, the emphasis is all on the innate qualities of the man, which qualified him for the status of a sage, a giant, a *Landesvater*, and on the popular trust he managed to gain and to maintain even in the most trying moments. Already, some of his contemporaries such as Adams and Hamilton had been concerned about the unchallenged powers his popularity with the soldiers and the public seemed to confer to him,⁸⁹ but none of this ever made it into these panegyrics of his exploits.

The Chinese sages with whom is he compared shared these idealized features. No institutional control of their powers was ever necessary because they themselves were keenly aware of the temptations of power and their innate character prompted them to do on their own initiative what otherwise institutional constraints would have forced them to do. Xiong Yuezhi’s observation about the Washington emulation during the early Republican period being focused on his anti-imperialist or anti-colonial credentials while accepting the need for such an outstanding person to maintain a high degree of autocratic control actually already applied to the American writings of Weems and others, as well as to the hagiographic tradition of depicting the image of Washington. It also applied to the writings about him by foreign missionaries in Chinese. The development of the institutions of the separation of powers and democratic control over governance for which the American Revolution has been hailed was not necessary for the likes of him. He resigned his role as commander-in-chief and president on his own initiative and insisted that the people should never offer anybody the role of a king. The Chinese sources mention the term limits established by but not for Washington. However, for example, the independence of the judiciary never played a role in these narratives. Washington was not simply the emblem

88 Sun Yirang 孫詒讓 (1848–1908) ends the preface to his *Zhouli zhengyao* 周禮政要 [Essentials of politics in the *Rites of Zhou*] (Beijing: Airusheng shuzihua jishu yanjiu zhongxin, 2009 [1902]), after a scathing critique of the shallowness and ignorance of the Confucian men of letters of his time, with the words: “If, however, among the gentlemen of this age there are some capable of penetrating to the root of heaven and man and of understanding the sources of order and chaos, they will take this classic and carefully scrutinize its theories and will base themselves on the old meaning [of terms] and the old [governmental] system so as to get access to the broad meaning and the subtle import of political structure and education, and they will, guided by reason, carefully study it, put it aside as their specialty and develop a deep understanding so as to wait for a coming sage.” See Rudolf G. Wagner, “A Classic Paving the Way to Modernity: The *Ritual of Zhou* in the Chinese Reform Debate Since the Taiping Civil War,” in *Modernity’s Classics*, ed. Sarah C. Humphreys and Rudolf G. Wagner (Heidelberg: Springer, 2013), 84–97.

89 Schwartz, *George Washington*, 88.

of the general will of the people, he was a leader who would get people to move on even in desperate circumstances, when most of them might want to abandon the cause. The language often used during the American Revolution of comparing it to the Exodus of the Jews from Egypt, with the implication that George Washington was in the role of Moses, signals the same combination of strong and autocratic leadership with innate rather than external controls against its abuse.

George Washington was not alone on this high pedestal. From early on, and often in the same publications, he shared this space with the second giant of that time, Napoleon. The common elements between the images of the two directly come to mind. They rose by popular acclaim due to their dramatic military exploits and capacity to rally the often reluctant masses. On the side of gaining what might be called “autocratic” control, their trajectory is similar. They led the people rather than just being an expression of the collective will of the moment. While not articulated in these writings, they shared a mistrust of the shiftiness of the popular will and made sure to have the wherewithal to lead rather than follow.

Napoleon did not trust the institutions put in place by the French Revolution. They had not managed to unify the country and he proceeded to abolish them and set himself up as emperor. He had no inherited claim to the throne and he installed himself as a truly new type of *min zhu* 民主 (ruler of the people), based on his vast popular appeal in France and beyond. The law code, the compilation of which the new emperor personally initiated and supervised, abolished any remaining pre-revolution institutions and established the framework for enlightened state structures that remained in force after his demise. He lacked, however, Washington’s understanding of the hubris that accompanies unrestrained power. This led to his overreach and eventual downfall, on which the Chinese writings about him were quite specific.

Washington, conversely, tried to set up an institutional framework to replace his own innate character with a combination of autocratic power in the president with separation of powers and democratic control. This was crowned by a success for all to see, embalmed with a benign disregard for some contrary developments with the claim that the United States had since been growing to great prosperity while retaining peaceful relations with its neighbors and the other powers.

The acceptance, documented above, by Chinese authors of an evaluation that put George Washington on par with these rare sages of Chinese antiquity signals that sagely dispensations have continued, but they are now offered by the likes of George Washington and are to be found in the best Western institutions. The pressure on potential candidates for rule was enormous, and is felt in their often awkward efforts to come to grips with what they

felt was their calling and destiny. None of them ever claimed to be the long-expected purely Chinese sage politician. Hong Xiuquan was the blond God's second son, Kang Youwei had an experience that seemed to prove to him a status as a "sage" who would be able to relieve the suffering of mankind.⁹⁰ His critics claimed that Kang set himself up as a Chinese Martin Luther. Sun Yat-sen, who was a baptized Christian, confided days before his death to Xu Qian 徐謙 (1871–1940), a Protestant and *jinshi* 進士 degree holder who had been one of the founders of the KMT, had served as Sun's secretary in Canton and was now actively involved at the time in promoting the plan for the national assembly, that God had sent him: "I am a protestant Christian. I have been sent by God with the mission to declare war to the demon of sin which is devastating the world."⁹¹ George Washington certainly was not the only model to emulate: Mazzini, Napoleon, and Madame Roland come to mind directly. Later figures such as Dewey, Babbit, Lenin, Gorki, Ovechkin, Gorbachev, and many other foreign public figures who were considered to have made a deep and lasting impact all found people who wanted to become their Chinese counterpart. They entered China as a rule not in the messiness of their real-life mortal configuration, but as the very idealized immortal figures of representation, which they had themselves already tried in vain to match with their real lives, a constellation as so brilliantly analyzed by Marin.⁹² It helped that Washington was as dead and alive as the sages of Chinese antiquity.

The representation of the political leader thus inverts the time sequence. While one would assume that the representation represents something that is already there and that it comes in as a sorry second, the actual situation is the other way around. The political leader's image-to-be precedes them and informs their performance down to their words, hairdo, and body language. It is grafted on a shared public image of the ideal political leader that in its turn is attached to figures such as George Washington. The real-life political leader comes in as the sorry second, as had George Washington in relation to the enlightenment model of the sober rational statesman eternalized through his apotheosis. The asymmetry between the real life person and its own icon in Washington's case is exacerbated in terms of time, space, and culture. In terms of time, because for all those who come later,

90 See Rudolf G. Wagner, "The Philologist as Messiah: Kang Youwei's 1902 Commentary on the Confucian Analects," in *Disciplining Classics – Altertumswissenschaft als Beruf*, ed. Glen Most (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2002), 147.

91 See *Peking Press*, March 20, 1925, quoted in French translation in Léon Wieger, *La Chine Moderne* (Hienhien: n.p., 1926), 6:171.

92 Louis Marin, *Des Pouvoirs de l'Image* (1993), chap. 1, paraphrased here from the German translation "Das Sein des Bildes," in Marin, *Von den Mächten des Bildes*, trans. Till Bardoux (Zurich: Diaphanes, 2007), 14–18.

the icon that is removed from time rather than the real mortal man is the standard against whom they have to measure themselves. In terms of space, because the Westerner from the distant shore becomes the standard against which Chinese political leaders are measured. In terms of culture because the sober enlightenment encoding of the foreign icon resets the Chinese hierarchy of values in a direct reevaluation and rereading of the hallowed pre-imperial Chinese golden age of the Three Dynasties.

The asymmetry of the real life Chinese reformers with these foreigners is not just one of China *vis-à-vis* the West, but at the same time it is one of a living political figure with the representation of his idealized self that glows with the double glamour of the Chinese golden age, and the prosperity, stability, power, sovereignty, and civilization of the most successful Western states.

After China's humiliating defeat by the Japanese "dwarves" in 1895, the question of what kind of person could lead China to regain its place as one of the great powers in the world became urgent for reform-minded youngsters such as Liang Qichao. The natural candidates were rulers who had inherited the throne but had then gone for great reforms of a kind needed in China at the time, with the Meiji Emperor and Peter the Great as the main models. The reformers hoped to make the Guangxu Emperor follow these models. For them to suggest he follow George Washington would have been a plaidoyer to abolish the monarchy. However, the *Shiwubao* 時務報, a reform paper founded by Liang Qichao in 1896, had started off with the ambitious plan to reprint a translation of the entire biography of George Washington by Washington Irving, which had come out in 1886, but it did not get beyond the full table of contents and the first chapter.⁹³ This discontinuation might not have been an accident. In the eyes of the editors, the time might not yet have come for a Chinese Washington. In its introduction, the translators mentioned two figures of supreme importance in the West: George Washington and Napoleon, but the former seemed a much more attractive model because he had succeeded in the long run.

Once the reformers had been sidelined by the Empress Dowager Cixi's coup in 1898, the moment to push for a Chinese Washington had come and we see a flurry of texts introducing him in the newly blossoming reform

93 "Huashengdun pingzhan 華盛頓評傳 [Critical biography of Washington]," trans. by Li Ruqian 黎汝謙 and Cai Guozhao 蔡國昭, *Shiwubao* 時務報 1 (1896): 1–7, 9, 10. Irving's biography had already been translated into Chinese in 1886. See also Washington Irving (Erfen Huashengdun 涇汾 華盛頓), *Huashengdun quanzhuan* 華盛頓全傳 [Complete biography of George Washington], trans. Li Ruqian 黎汝謙 and Cai Guozhao 蔡國昭 (Shanghai: Zhuyitang, 1886). The name of the publisher is inferred from an advertisement for the book in *Shenbao*, November 24, 1886.

press.⁹⁴ Zou Rong's 鄒容 (1885–1905) anti-Manchu tract *The Revolutionary Army* (*Geming jun* 革命軍, 1901) is littered with references to Western thinkers. In his preface, he notes that he believes “in the great thinkers Rousseau, Washington and Walt Whitman.” Moreover, it is perhaps strange to find that one of the most famous revolutionary tracts of early Chinese nationalism begins with a sentence that advocates in typical hyperbole cleansing “ourselves of 260 years of harsh and unremitting pain [inflicted by the Qing court], so that [...] the descendants of the Yellow Emperor will all become Washingtons.”⁹⁵ Zou thinks of revolution as a global process and not merely a Chinese phenomenon.

Revolution is the universal principle of evolution. Revolution is a universal principle of the world [*shijie zhi gongli* 世界之公理]. Revolution is the essence of the struggle for survival or destruction in a time of transition. Revolution follows heaven and responds to human needs. Revolution rejects the corrupt and keeps the good. Revolution is the advance from barbarism to civilization. Revolution turns slaves into masters.⁹⁶

The popularity of describing foreign nations and portraying foreigners as heroes helped fashion a subgenre of the Chinese political novel. The serial novel *Taixi lishi yanyi* 泰西歷史演義 (A historical romance of the Far West) published in 1903–1904 by Xihong'an zhu 洗紅龕主,⁹⁷ for example, is based on a composite of segments of European political history with different historical players at the center. The novel opens with these words: “We now are talking about the five continents under heaven. Among them, the first to achieve wealth and power was Europe.”⁹⁸ This set the stage for a new geo-political horizon for the novel. The story about Europe starts with France and centers on the life and deeds of Napoleon I. For England, it focuses on the “discovery” of India and the history of the East India Company, and how it brought civilization and modern standards to this country by building schools, establishing newspapers, opening up mines, promoting modern medicine, eradicating old customs, and establishing effective forms of

94 An extensive bibliography with summary of the different articles can be found in Xiong, “Huashengdun xingxiang.”

95 Tsou Jong [Zou Rong], *The Revolutionary Army*, trans. John Lust (Paris: Mouton, 1968), 58.

96 Tsou, *The Revolutionary Army*, 58.

97 Xihong'an zhu 洗紅龕主, *Taixi lishi yanyi* 泰西歷史演義 [A historical romance of the Far West], serialized in *Xiuxiang xiaoshuo* 繡像小說, issues 1–13, 15–21, 23–25, 29–38 (1903–1904). First monograph edition Shanghai: Zhongguo shangwu yinshuguan bianyi suo, 1906; edition used here Taipei: Guangya, 1984.

98 Xihong'an zhu, *Taixi lishi yanyi*, 1.

government. The story of North America is centered on George Washington and the war of independence with the main emphasis on resisting and confronting English colonialism. The novel ends with Peter the Great and his reforms. In this historical trajectory, the Chinese reader is offered a view of European and American history as the history of reform and struggle for national independence. It engages the readers with these issues, and challenges them to imagine their own, still uncompleted, political reform and the new kind of political leader needed to implement them.

In the evolutionary paradigm where nations move forward toward civilization, reform, and national independence are the next steps for an old civilization such as China. *A Record of America's Independence* (*Meilijian zili ji* 美利堅自立記, 1901) by Xuan Fanzi 宣樊子 (Lin Xie 林獬, 1874–1926)⁹⁹ outlines the trajectory from the successful rebellion by the Americans against English unjust taxation to their gaining independence from what clearly was the leading world power at the time.

The establishment of the Republic: The Washington moment

Once the last Qing emperor had abdicated and the Republic of China was established in 1912, the pressure to emulate George Washington became real for the new leaders of the republic. It started with the choice of the title of the leader of the republic. It was to be *Zongtong* 總統, a term originally created to translate George Washington's title as president of the United States.¹⁰⁰ The idealized image of this type of public leader was not just grating the souls of the candidates for this role, but was also informing public perceptions and was held by the public against the all-too-small living politicians of their time. A little entry in a dictionary might open a window here. Explaining one of the uses of the indefinite article, i.e. "a," in English in 1936, a Chinese English dictionary gave the following example: "We need a Washington (*women xuyao yige xiang Huashengdun de ren* 我們需要一個像華盛頓的人)."¹⁰¹ This is not a random example, but a seemingly widely shared preoccupation.

99 Xuan Fanzi 宣樊子 (Lin Xie 林獬), "Meilijian zili ji 美利堅自立記 [A record of America's independence]," *Hangzhou baihua bao* 杭州白話報, nos. 4–10 (1901–1902). Lin Xie, also known as Lin Baishui 林白水, was a political activist and journalist during the late Qing and early Republican periods. He was the founder of *Zhongguo baihua bao* 中國白話報 and the chief editor of *Hangzhou baihua bao* 杭州白話報. He wrote many political commentaries for Beijing newspapers and was executed for his comments by a warlord in 1926.

100 See Xiong Yuezhi, "'Liberty,' 'Democracy,' 'President': The Translation and Usage of Some Political Terms in Late Qing China," in *New Terms for New Ideas: Western Knowledge and Lexical Change in Late Imperial China*, ed. Michael Lackner, Iwo Amelung, and Joachim Kurtz (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 76–86.

101 Zhan Wenxu 詹文許, *A Daily Use English Chinese Dictionary* (Shanghai: World Book Co., 1936), 1.

To guide the young Republic of China through this difficult time internally and externally, someone of the stature of a modern Yao or Shun was needed, and one of the best recent examples that came to mind was Washington. There was a public expectation and hope that someone would turn up who might fit into these big shoes, so that the eternal lament “if only we had a Washington” could become “we do have the second Washington right here in China.” In a commemorative article celebrating its fiftieth birthday in 1922, the *Shenbao* looked back and claimed “had China had a Washington, it would not have gone through so many troubles.”¹⁰² These random references indicate a general expectation for some grand savior figure of the George Washington size (but not necessarily very similar to him in the political program and role), that would be able to establish Chinese sovereignty *vis-à-vis* the powers and drag China along into modernity.

This expectation created a public space and platform for candidates to configure themselves and try their mettle. Huang Xing 黃興 (1874–1916), the rebel military leader in Hanyang associated with Sun Yat-sen, had written to Yuan Shikai on November 9, 1911:

Your capabilities, sir, are supreme beyond any comparison, as you have, starting out from a caliber of a Napoleon and Washington, on the basis of the qualities of a Napoleon and Washington you built achievements of a Napoleon and Washington, established the achievements of a Napoleon and Washington, straightforwardly attacking the Yellow Dragon [of the Manchu court] and sitting down for breakfast after having annihilated this vile creature, not only the people in Hunan and Hubei have elevated you, sir, to a Napoleon and Washington, there should also be not one on the different provinces both north and south who does bow before you to receive your orders.¹⁰³

102 Quoted in Wang Long 王龍, “‘Huashengdun shenhua’ zai Zhongguo beihuan jiyu ‘華盛頓神話’在中國的悲歡際遇 [The changing fortunes of the ‘Washington myth’ in China],” *Baijia jiangtan* 百家講壇 7 (2008): 70–74. I have not been able to trace the actual text Wang refers to. It is not in the *Shenbao* on or around the paper’s fiftieth anniversary on April 30, 1922, but might be in the commemorative volume published for the occasion.

103 Huang Xing 黃興, “Zhi Yuan Shikai shu 致袁世凱書 [Letter to Yuan Shikai],” in *Huang Xing ji* 黃興集, ed. Hunan sheng shehui kexueyuan 湖南省社會科學院 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1981), 82. I was alerted to this letter through an article by Fan Fuchao 范福潮, “Yuan Shikai dangxuan linshi da zongtong qian de nanbei boyi 袁世凱當選臨時大總統前的南北博弈 [Strategic games played between north and south before Yuan Shikai was elected provisional president],” *Nanfang zhoubao* 南方周末 [Southern weekly], September 24, 2008, accessed April 26, 2013, via <https://archive.is/20130426164327/http://www.infzm.com/content/17556>.

With this flattering letter, Huang Xing was trying to woo Yuan to take on a leadership role in the military arena where Sun Yat-sen had no expertise. In a general horizon of expectation of a Chinese Washington to emerge, this letter offered Yuan the role of establishing Chinese sovereignty and independence from the Manchu “imperialists” (rather than from the Western powers) along the lines of Washington. It also offered the role of having overcome an effete feudal rule along the lines of Napoleon, while leaving the option open for Yuan Shikai to decide whether he would follow Washington in self-renegeing public service or follow Napoleon in setting himself up as a new emperor.

A few weeks later, Sun Yat-sen returned to the issue in his letter of congratulation to Yuan Shikai in mid-February 1912, after the latter had been elected president of the republic to succeed him. Sun at the time tried to limit the leeway of Yuan Shikai (Fig. 16)¹⁰⁴ in his new role by passing a new constitution that included the provision that Yuan would have to pledge to uphold it and by trying to fix the capital as Nanjing, far away from Yuan’s power base in Zhili 直隸 in the north. This context gives Sun’s letter a different tilt. In his telegram to Yuan on February 17, 1912, Sun said:

If we go through world history there is only a single person who has been elected unanimously as president, and that is Washington. I wish you goodbye, and rejoice with all the others that you are the second Washington in the world, and the first in our China.¹⁰⁵

The Napoleon option was not mentioned, and by insisting on Yuan being the Chinese Washington, he tried to put symbolical constraints on the man, tying him to the model of Washington’s public spirit that included his insistence on relinquishing the presidency after two terms even though there had been loud voices at the time offering him the throne of the king of the United States.¹⁰⁶ Being forced to stick to this dour icon might be no fun for some. Sun Yat-sen himself, however, was waiting to put on this proverbial big overcoat. In his inaugural speech, Yuan Shikai took up the issue. When a journalist from the Dalu bao claimed in an interview, that “there are people who say that the president (Yuan Shikai) is set to emulate Napoleon” with the implication that he wanted to set himself up as a new emperor, Yuan

104 Rio V. de Sieux, “President Yuan Shih-kai of China,” *The World’s Work, Volume XXX, May, 1915, to October, 1915: A History of Our Time*, ed. Arthur W. Page (Garden City: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1915), 378. See also Yuan’s statement on p. 452 of the same volume.

105 Huang Xing, “Zhi Yuan Shikai shu,” 82.

106 One such voice was Colonel Lewis Nicola, to whom Washington wrote a letter indicating his abhorrence at the thought of becoming king, “George Washington to Lewis Nicola, May 22, 1882,” National Archives: Founders Online, accessed August 1, 2018, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/99-01-02-08501>.

shot back “I wish to be Washington, not Napoleon. Washington is the most famous personality in history. He established a free state. Why should I wish to emulate Napoleon and not Washington?”¹⁰⁷ In his letter of accepting the presidency on October 10, 1913, he elaborated:

Confucius said: “Without the people’s trust [a state] will have no sustenance.” In the different civilized states people censured for betrayal will be punished with the equivalent of a flogging in court [in China]. In his youth, Washington was instructed by his father never to lie. Our country has always emphasized trust and justice, but as people recently did not follow the ancients and were given to cheating it is already difficult to establish oneself, not to mention setting up a state.”¹⁰⁸

This was at least a public posture that he would follow Washington’s model rather than Napoleon’s. Barely two years later, however, his plans to set himself up as a new emperor signaled a shift to a Napoleonic model. It also came with a loss of trust among elements of the elite and also within popular circles. His publicized image also indicates his commitment to the pomp and circumstance of power.

From an early time on, Sun Yat-sen had a keen sense of the importance of the public image of an aspiring political leader and he knew that, in this time and age, the “public” in this public image was transnational with acceptance among the wealthy Huaqiao and among the powers being crucial.¹⁰⁹ The “absence of a heroic leader” for China (Wong) was not only deplored in China itself, the same feeling was expressed by Western papers and political figures.¹¹⁰ It is still not entirely clear how Sun ended up in the Chinese embassy in London in 1896, but the self-casting as the romantic Chinese fighter for independence and progress with ample support from foreign friends was a masterpiece of transnational political image formation.¹¹¹ A book was published in English under Sun’s name at the time that successfully linked up the

107 Quoted in Bai Jiao 白蕉, *Yuan Shikai yu Zhonghua minguo* 袁世凱與中華民國 [Yuan Shikai and the Chinese Republic] (Shanghai: Shanghai renwen yuekanshe 1936; reprint Taipei: Wenhai chubanshe, 1966), 65.

108 Zhang Bofeng 章伯鋒 and Li Zongyi 李宗一, eds., *Beiyang junfa 1912–1928* 北洋军阀 1912–1928, vol. 2 (Wuhan: Wuhan chubanshe 1990), 1386–1389.

109 He did not lack self-confidence either, as his letter to Li Hongzhang testified, in which he offers his services as someone utterly familiar with all the sciences as well as the political institutions of the West.

110 J. Y. Wong, *The Origins of an Heroic Image: Sun Yatsen in London, 1896–1897* (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1986), 296.

111 Wong, *The Origins of an Heroic Image*, 274–275.



Fig. 16: The Vanity of Power: Yuan Shikai in official regalia.

motif of the Chinese fighter for independence and progress with British romantic revolutionary ideas current since the days of Byron and Mazzini's associate Ruffini.¹¹² Herbert Giles was impressed enough by the British media clamor to offer Sun the chance to write his own entry for his *Chinese Biographical Dictionary* (1898).¹¹³ In this manner, Sun joined the 2579 most illustrious Chinese figures of all time and was one of the very few living Chinese persons who made the cut, others being the likes of Li Hongzhang.

Sun Yat-sen customized his own appearance to match the claim of incorruptible sober devotion to the Chinese public good conveyed by his message. His assessment of the maturity of the Chinese public, and even his comrades-in-arms for the great enterprise was pessimistic and expressed in his endless frustration about what he perceived as the backward habits of the Chinese. The new secret party he had founded in 1914 in Tokyo to

112 Sun Yat-sen, *Kidnapped in London* (Bristol: J. W. Arrowsmith, 1897).

113 Herbert Giles, *A Chinese Biographical Dictionary* (London: Bernard Quaritch, 1898), 696.

challenge Yuan Shikai and prepare for a renewed bid for power, the *Zhonghua geming dang* 中華革命黨, reflects this distrust. The members had to vow to stay loyal to Sun Yat-sen and follow his orders very much in the manner of the statutes of Mazzini's Young Italy (*La Giovine Italia*) in 1842 in Marseille.¹¹⁴ Many of his old comrades therefore refused to join. As Sun was alive, there was a constant stressful tension between his physical body and the iconic and essentially timeless image of himself he tried to convey. The photographic image together with the Zhongshan dress he developed as the model clothing to express Chinese transcultural modernity went a long way to help bridge this structural gap. This was the standardized and idealized form in which Sun Yat-sen distributed his own image to supporters. A family heirloom will illustrate this point.

The image in Fig. 17 is the front side of a postcard that was obviously printed in large numbers for gifting to patrons and supporters. It carries an inscription from Sun's own hand "For Ye Duxing as a keepsake" (*Duxing xiansheng huicun* 獨醒先生惠存). It was given to Ye Duxing 葉獨醒 most probably shortly before July 1914, when Sun wrote to Ye asking him to help recruit leading participants in the 1911 revolution to the new organization.¹¹⁵ Ye had been living in Manila, but returned to Gulangyu, near Xiamen, after the revolution. The name *Duxing* 獨醒 (the one who is alone in being enlightened) was actually given to Ye by Sun. It signals their common Enlightenment agenda, but also the isolation or elitism of their enterprise, as well as the supreme position of Sun himself as the person with the authority to change the name of an important follower.

114 §7 of the statutes stipulated that party members would vow to "sacrifice their entire life, freedom and rights to create the conditions for the success of the revolution". §16 gave the president of the party "the complete authority" to develop the strategy for developing a revolutionary army, and §17 gave him the authority to nominate all the commanders. See *Zhonghua minguo guofu shilu* 中華民國國父實錄 [*The factual account of Dr. Sun Yat-sen*], ed. Luo Gang 羅剛 et al., 6 vols. (Taipei: Zhonghua dadian, 1988), vol. 3, 2430–2431. In letters to KMT leaders reluctant to join, Sun made it clear that everyone had "to submit to the top leader." He referred to the German sociologist and political scientist Robert Michels (called *Miqieer* 密且兒), who had argued in his *Political Parties: A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy* (German 1911, Italian 1912, English 1915, the English version is accessible online at <http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/MicPoli.html>) that political parties cannot be democratic in their internal structure and always end up being oligarchic. While meant as an analytical study, this acclaimed work was read by Sun as prescriptive, and Michels himself ended up in Italy joining Mussolini's party. See Sun Yat-sen, "Zhi Chen Xinzheng ji Nanyang tongzhi lun zuzhi Zhonghua gemingdang zhi yi yi shu 致陳新政暨南洋同志論組織中華革命黨之意義書陳新政等函 [Letter to Chen Xinzheng and comrades from Southeast Asia on the significance of organizing a revolutionary party]," June 15, 1914, reprint in *Guofu quanji* 國父全集 [Complete works of the Father of the Nation] (Taipei: Zhongguo guomindang zhongyang weiyuanhui dangshi weiyuanhui chubanshu, 1985), vol. 4, 315–316, and Sun Yat-sen, "Pi Chen Xinzheng deng han 批陳新政等函 [Letter to Chen Xinzheng et al.]," July 29, 1914, reprint in *Guofu quanji*, vol. 6, 99–100.

115 Luo Gang et al., *Zhonghua minguo guofu shilu*, 3:2453.



Fig. 17: *The self-fashioning of Sun Yat-sen: the gifting of his photograph on a postcard to Ye Duxing, 1913. Private collection.*

Sun's hairdo was modern and Western. His style of moustache was the marker of many political figures at the time, but is something that still stands out as a marker of foreignness. Sun's facial expression appears to be directly patterned on that of Washington in the Stuart portrait. It seems aimed to show resolve, inner strength, and a rational soberness. The outfit was designed by Sun and his Vietnamese tailor. It combined features of the business suits worn by Huaqiao businessmen in Southeast Asia with elements from Japanese military uniforms. It carried none of the accoutrements of the vanity of power, serving instead to reinforce Sun's stern expression with its rigorous insistence on unadorned simplicity and rational practicality. It was designed as the visual and political opposite to Yuan Shikai (Fig. 18; Fig. 19; cf. Fig. 16). The emphasis in the *Laozi* (chap. 19) on the necessity of a sage to "embrace simplicity" (*bao pu* 抱樸) as a strategy for preventing the hundred clans from losing themselves in the vanity of embellishments comes to mind. While designed as a tool for acquiring patronage and recruiting membership recalling the uses of such images by Shanghai courtesans, the Sun Yat-sen in this image does not offer the lure of physical attractiveness, charm, and charitable warmth, but

instead offers authority and leadership untainted by personal or sentimental considerations. The image retains a record of its effect. The recipient Ye Duxing himself hand-copied Sun Yat-sen's calligraphed slogan *boai* 博愛 (encompassing love), including Sun's signature, onto a large screen that was attached above the door of his house. A photograph clip of this screen was then glued onto Sun's photograph. In this form, it might have had a place at some venerated central locality within the house.

The slogan links the image of Sun the man with his political program. This man was to generously and sternly take care of all. The other side of the postcard demonstrates the success of this strategy to implant the leader's image. Here, Ye Duxing entrusts this family heirloom, which testifies to the close relationship of the Ye family to the "father of the nation" and to their contribution to the republic, to his son. The father Ye Duxing entrusts this heirloom to the son Ye Zhupei 葉諸沛 (1902–1971) for safekeeping. Ye Zhupei was to become a prominent metallurgist working in the Academy of Sciences in Beijing. A lineage is established here, which gives political continuity to the family, status to the descendants, but also something to live up to.¹¹⁶

This small piece of evidence can be taken to represent a policy fostered by Sun Yat-sen over decades. He distributed his picture with his signature, he had himself photographed with any especially foreign person of importance, he had his political message recorded and broadcast by radio and phonogram record, and he had his speeches and writings printed in Chinese, English, and Japanese. In this manner Sun, who held no political power outside Guangzhou since he had ceded the presidency to Yuan Shikai in a truly Washingtonesque gesture of sacrificing all for the perceived public good and disregarding petty personal interests, managed to develop and maintain a national and international media presence as well as a national and international stature in the public realm that operated independently of the institutions of the republic and made him a power to be reckoned with on the national stage.

Sun's efforts to dissociate his image and political bequests through the eternity of reproducible media from the vagaries of a human body with human frailties and concerns so as to make it into the absolute and pure emblem of Chinese political and moral modernity came to a head with his death in 1925. In fact, the only thing that stood between him and immortality was life. With the death of his flesh body, the etherealized iconic features of his political message, which he canonized through his testament and his

116 See Ye Shushan 葉淑珊, with Ye Liangxia 葉良俠 and Ye Kaiqi 葉凱蒂, "Huiyi wode fuqin Ye Zhupei 回憶我的父親葉諸沛 [Commemorating my father Ye Zhupei]," in *Ye Zhupei jinian wenji* 葉諸沛紀念文集 [Collected works in commemoration of Ye Zhupei], ed. Zhongguo kexueyuan guocheng gongcheng yanjiusuo 中國科學院過程工程研究所 (Beijing: Kexue chubanshe, 2012), 169–174.

photographic image, which perennially fixed his features were finally free to take over his image. The slogan spread at the time, “Although Zhongshan is dead, Sunyatsenism lives eternally” (*Zhongshan sui si, Zhongshanzhuyi yongcun* 中山虽死, 中山主义永存) encapsulates this message.¹¹⁷ A similar situation had occurred with Washington, Lincoln, and Lenin. Their deaths ended the often bitter resentments against them, and led to an outpouring of collective feeling that in each case was focused on the political message rather than the loss of a loved one. The KMT leaders had read their history, and were making sure that the occasion would not be wasted. The ensuing apotheosis through national rituals, first of his temporary burial in the Azure Cloud Monastery (Biyunsi 碧雲寺) in the Beijing Western hills, and then in 1928 with his eventual burial in Zhongshan ling on Mount Zijin 紫金山 outside the new capital of Nanjing cleansed him of the factionalism, pettiness, and politicking surrounding his actual life and elevated him to the Olympus of normativity.

Shortly before his death, he had rebuilt the KMT along the lines of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union with Borodin’s help. It provided his “Three People’s Principles” (*sanminzhuyi* 三民主義) with an organizational framework and came with a theory of Chinese governance by the KMT in three stages. Given the perceived immaturity of the populace at large, the first stage was to be defined as a period of “political tutelage” by the Party under the leadership of its chairman. While this tutelage is to be exercised by the party, this role of the Party as well as the de facto crucial role of its chairman meant a full integration of the autocratic “Napoleonic” element into Sun’s and the KMT’s government doctrine and practice.

In addition, the party’s reorganization provided it with a capable and active machinery of propaganda. With the successful end of the Northern Expedition in 1927 and the establishment of at least nominal national control by the KMT, the models on which Sun himself was grafted were expanded to include a comparison with Lincoln as the man who had held north and south together, and with Sun’s focus on a revolutionary party, Lenin became the third model. The Lincoln Memorial in Washington that had just been completed became the architectural model for Sun’s tomb on Zhongshan Mountain outside Nanjing, and the embalming of Lenin with availability to public viewings through a coffin with a crystal lid became Sun’s own will for the treatment of his physical remains.¹¹⁸ The hybridity of this simultaneous apotheosis into different quarters of immortality was nicely brought out through the constant references to these foreigners

117 “Jingshi dangbu zhi gedi tongzhi han 京市党部致各地同志函 [A letter from the Beijing party committee to comrades throughout the nation],” *Guangzhou guomin ribao*, March 27, 1925.

118 For details on Sun’s burials, see Wagner, “Ritual, Architecture, Politics.”

in the commemorative couplets written in Beijing, and in the banner hung over the entry to Biyunsi when Sun's coffin was brought in. "Merits higher than Washington's. Knowledge broader than Marx's. To understand is easy, to put into practice is hard. His famous words circulate throughout the country."¹¹⁹ Sun (or Wang Jingwei 汪精衛, 1883–1944) had seen in the Soviet embassy in Beijing a clip of the burial procession for Lenin that would later be included in the film about Lenin by Dziga Vertov Дзига Вертов and was eager to mobilize similar unifying energies in his fractured country.¹²⁰ Sun's embalmed body would be the ultimately realistic representation of his iconic self, bereft of temporality and mortal frailty, but still the real thing, visible and present to silently and insistently remind his countrymen that "the revolution was not yet completed."¹²¹

Men of his caliber were as unique as the few sages of Chinese antiquity. In the modern world, these figures would be instrumental in setting up new nations and their structures, and to act out a model of enlightened behavior that would act as a severe constraint on their successors. Therefore it was necessary that, apart from their continued presence in media and memory, their physical uniqueness at this historical juncture should be accessible. Carlyle had emphasized the role of the hero in history, and on the communist side, his argument had been made acceptable by Plekhanov in 1898 with his essay "The Role of the Individual in History."¹²² The KMT demonstrated that with its capacity to control the ritual surrounding Sun's death in Beijing it had the caliber not only for such symbolic ritual control, but also for the political control of the fragmented country. The Nanjing ceremony after the Northern Expedition that bestowed national leadership on the KMT

119 Guan Guoxuan 關國煊, "Lingqi Biyunsi, changchen Zijinshan: Sun Zhongshan xiansheng feng'an dianli wushiwu zhou nian jinian 靈棲碧雲寺, 長臥紫金山: 孫中山先生奉安典禮五十五週年紀念 [Temporarily resting in Azure Cloud Monastery, eternally reposing on Mt. Zijin: in commemoration of the fifty-fifth anniversary of the burial ceremony for Mr. Sun Zhongshan]," *Zhuanji wenxue* 傳記文學 44, no. 6 (1984): 11.

120 Shown in the Soviet Embassy in Beijing in March 1924, see Jiang Chunfang 姜椿芳, "Sulian dianying zai Zhongguo 蘇聯電影在中國 [Soviet films in China]," *Dianying yishu* 電影藝術 5 (1959): 23. Clip published as part of Dziga Vertov Дзига Вертов, dir., *Kino-pravda no. 21. Leninskaia kino-pravda. Кино-Правда №21. Кинопоэма о Ленине. К первой годовщине смерти* Ленинская Кино-Правда – Кинопоэма о Ленине. К первой годовщине смерти [Film truth no. 21. Leninist film-truth. Film poem about Lenin. To the first anniversary of his death] (Moscow: Kultkino Культикино), January 21, 1925.

121 For a stimulating analysis of the dead body of the political leader, see Boris Groys "Lenin und Lincoln: Zwei Gestalten des modernen Todes [Lenin and Lincoln: the images of modern death]," in Groys, *Die Erfindung Russlands* (Munich: Carl Hanser, 1995), 180–186.

122 Georgi Valentinovich Plekhanov Георгий Валентинович Плеханов, *K vosprosu o roli lichnosti v istorii* К вопросу о роли личности в истории [On the role of the individual in history], *Nauchnoye obozreniye* Научное обозрение 1898, nos. 3–4 (March 1898): 604–619.

in the new capital finally celebrated the KMT's combined ritual and political control.

With Sun's apotheosis his image became the signature of the new state machinery set up by the KMT in 1928.¹²³ All public venues of the republic down to kindergartens had to have a standardized and approved image of Sun Yat-sen in the center of the front wall surrounded by the flags of the KMT and the republic.¹²⁴ The funeral train carrying Sun from Beijing to Nanjing in 1928 was emblazoned in front of the engine with an image of the deceased leader that well captures his official mien.

A weekly ritual of commemorating Sun's bequests was introduced in some areas already in 1925, and nationwide from 1928. It took place in a hall before the image of Sun, started with three bows, followed by three minutes of silent commemoration of his bequests, then the loud reading of his testament, and ended with a speech on the duties at hand for the next week from a leader. On Sun's birthday and the day of his death, larger ceremonies were held. From these state-managed places with their KMT officials in Zhongshan suits, the image dispersed down into society and even into the homes of villagers in far-away places. After Chiang Kai-shek had married the sister of Sun's wife in



Fig. 18: Uncredited official KMT portrait of Sun Yat-sen (public domain). Stamps and money carried his standardized image around the world.

123 See Chen Yunqian, "Hefaxing," 2.

124 Dong Wen 董文, ed., *Shehui keben* 社會課本 [Social primer] (Shanghai: Shijie shuju, 1933), vol. 2, lesson 6.



Fig. 19: Head of propaganda train preceding Sun Yat-sen's burial ceremonies, Nanjing, 1929. Rom Liangyou huabao 良友畫報 (*The young companion*), no. 37 (1929), 3.

an awkward ceremony with the picture of the dead man in the middle of this celebration of a coming new life, it became *de rigueur* for many young urban couples to do the same.¹²⁵ Propaganda booklets told Party members what the proper thoughts would be during the three weekly minutes of silence, and schoolbooks introduced the selfless incessant devotion of Sun to the public good:

In regular mourning ceremonies, the three minutes of silence have a content of mourning thought, and a function to show an earnest attitude. The three minutes of mourning in religion have, beyond showing a reverent attitude, also the meaning of considering one's failings. The three minutes for the *zongli* (President Sun Yat-sen) have as their most important meaning beyond the expression of a feeling of sadness and a reverent attitude in the "thinking" part of the word "silent thinking." [...] During the first minute, it is to get the participants in the commemorative meeting to silently think about the teachings left behind by the *zongli*, and to silently think

125 "Henan zanxing hunli yishi 河南暫行婚禮儀式 [Preliminary guidelines for wedding ceremonies in Henan]" (October 28, 1927), in *Henan jiaoyu tekan* 河南教育特刊 (Henan: Jiaoyuting, 1929), quoted from Liu Jingxiang 劉景向, ed., *Henan xinzhì* 河南新誌 [New gazetteer of Henan] (Zhengzhou: Zhongzhou guji chubanshe, 1990 [1929]), 139, 141, 142.

about the goal, methods, instruments, and stages of the people's revolution as handed down by the *zongli* to us [...]. The second minute is to get the participants in the commemorating ceremony to turn their thoughts back to the work of the past week, to let it pass review whether or not one has contravened the teachings left behind by the *zongli*, whether one has disregarded the teachings left behind by the *zongli* and has followed one's own whims. If such should be the case, one should express one's regrets in front of the image of the *zongli*. If then one still does not manage, what else could help to make one realize the *zongli*'s ideology? [...] The third minute is to make the participants think about next week's work and to make a stringent plan of how to work during the next week, of how to ensure that they will not deviate from the *zongli*'s teachings, of how their work can be the work of someone who can be counted as a party loyalist, how they can avoid being influenced by the enemy and how they can promote the *zongli*'s ideology. During the three minutes of silence before the image of the *zongli*, one has to deeply reflect in every minute: only then will one not fall into some religious blank stupor, but it actually has a meaning.¹²⁶

The ceremony combines the elements of image (Sun's image at center stage), time (the three minutes set aside weekly for this), space (it is a collective affair in a meeting room), and ideological education (focus on Sun's message rather than religious and emotional commemoration).

In these ceremonies, meditation on his mien and appearance served as pointers to his political message and personal virtues. A schoolbook again gives a good idea:

Facing the portrait of the deceased Sun Zhongshan

This is the portrait of the deceased Mr. Sun Zhongshan, our father of the nation. As we all know, Mr. Sun gave all his energies to the revolution, laboring all his life, rushing from here to there all his life without a single day of rest, without a single day of fun, for whose benefit did he do all this?

Look, look carefully, how kind his mien is, how benevolent. From that you can see that he is a man of virtue and compassion. It is because he is such a man of virtue and compassion that he was willing to labor all his life, rushing from here to there in his

126 *Guomindang Zhejiang sheng dangwu zhidao weiyuanhui xunlianbu* 國民黨浙江省黨務指導委員會訓練部, ed., "Zongli jinianzhou xiangjie 總理紀念周詳解 [Detailed explanation of the President's Memorial Week]," March 1929, quoted in Li Gongzhong, "'Zongli nianzhou' yu minguo zhengzhi wenhua," 57.

revolutionary endeavor to bring about the salvation of the country and of the people.

Look, look carefully, how tall and straight his eyebrows are, and his lips are firmly closed in a manner full of perseverance and steadfastness. From this you can see that he is a man of courage. It is because he is a man of courage that he is able amidst daily terrifying turbulences to pursue his revolutionary endeavor with its untold dangers.

Look again, look carefully, how bright Mr. Sun's eyes are. From this you can know that he is a man of knowledge who sees through all dark obstacles. It is only because he is a man of knowledge that is able to plan, to guide, and to lead the comrades to pursue the revolutionary endeavor in a planned and organized way.¹²⁷

There is a strong echo between the key elements in this glorification and the accolades for George Washington quoted above. The last step came at an odd moment. When Wang Jingwei had established his Nanjing government and was in effective control of the *Zhongshan ling*, he developed a new ceremony around the “sacred entrails” of Sun Yat-sen that had been retrieved from Beijing and united with the embalmed body. Wang Jingwei had been a very close associate of Sun's and tried to use Sun's very close contacts with Japanese politicians to bolster his own political alliance with Japan.¹²⁸

Against this effort of Wang Jingwei to upstage the Chongqing KMT in the veneration of Sun Yat-sen, Chiang Kai-shek took the last step in the official glorification of the image of the political leader. As we have seen, Sun had been informally given the epithet “father of the nation” even in officially approved schoolbooks. The earliest uses of this term for him go back to the first years of the republic. To have a “father of the nation” was a key ingredient of many of the new national states, and we see Atatürk, Gandhi, and many others joining this league. The Chongqing KMT thus decided in March 1940 to officially confer the title “father of the nation” on Sun Yat-sen.¹²⁹ Needless to say, this

127 Zhu Wenshu 朱文叔 et al., eds., *Xiaoxue guoyu duben* 小學國語讀本 [Chinese Reader for Elementary Schools], vol. 4. (Shanghai: Zhonghua shuju 1934), 30–31, quoted in Chen Wenqian, “Zongli yixiang’,” 109–110.

128 Wang compiled a book with Sun's relevant speeches on the friendship with Japan. Sun Yat-sen. *China and Japan: Natural Friends – Unnatural Enemies. A Guide for China's Foreign Policy*, ed. Tang Leang-li, foreword by Wang Ching-wei (Shanghai: China United Press, 1941).

129 “Guanyu zuncheng Sun xiansheng wei Zhonghua minguo guofu zhi shengming 關於尊稱孫先生為中華民國國父之聲明 [On the announcement to honor Mr. Sun Yat-sen with the honorific Father of the Republic of China],” in *Zhonghua minguo shishi jiyao* 中華民國史事紀要, ed. Zhu Huisen 朱匯森 (January to June 1940) (Taipei: Zhonghua minguo shiliao yanjiu zhongxin, 1984), 414–415.

was at the very moment when the republic was foundering. Sun Yat-sen, however, even survived the end of the Republic altogether. *Zhongshan ling* has been refurbished after much destruction to provide a platform and symbol for “unity of the fatherland” with Taiwan, and on a recent May 1 demonstration in Beijing there were no images of Marx, Engels, Lenin or Stalin, but there was one of Sun Yat-sen.

Conclusion

In tune with traditional notions about the ideal mode of operation of a Chinese ruler, his individualized image was not in the public domain. Illustrations in political guidebooks and biographies of worthies from the past, however, would contain images of some sage rulers from the past.

With the spreading perception that China was in some sort of crisis came the notion that it could only be pulled out of that crisis by someone with grand stature and charisma and an utter devotion to the public good. One of the platforms on which the features of such a personality were discussed was the description of foreign countries that had now developed great wealth and power fostered by stable and morally excellent institutions. George Washington was a key figure in this storyline, with Napoleon a distant second. The other platform was the discussion about the institutions of China’s golden age of the Three Dynasties, assumed by many to be described in the Rites of Zhou (*Zhouli* 周禮). Here, the hope for a savior of China was articulated in the projection of a “sage to come,” for whom preparations had to be made now. Both narratives merged in the discovery that the underlying ideas of the *Zhouli* were exactly those that were underlying the Western institutions, which, however, had been further developed. The features of the sage-to-come were thus strongly associated with the Enlightenment agenda put forward by George Washington.

The glorification of Washington after his death reached China in the form of a booming market for copies of Washington portraits and of the apotheosis of Washington. His image was thus familiar to southern elite members when the Protestant missionaries and then early world geographers such as Xu Jiyu, Liang Dingnan, and Lin Zexu described the words and deeds of Washington. A mental space was created for a Chinese Washington who would reform the polity and bring about a sovereignty and prosperity akin to that of the United States. Various candidates offered to fill this space and claimed the mandate to do so, Kang Youwei and Sun Yatsen most distinctly so. Washington had been able to do so due to his innate qualities rather than an institutional structure that was yet to emerge. He relied on his innate devotion to the public good by stepping down on his own initiative from his position of autocratic military and civilian power although the descriptions of his exploits were clear that he had made full use of it while he occupied it. On the point of these grand exploits, the images of Washington and Napoleon in Chinese nineteenth-

century writings overlap, but it was George Washington who manage to secure long-term security, stability, and prosperity for his country by strictly adhering to a commitment to the public good rather than the vanity of power.

Sun Yat-sen from early on saw the core requirements for filling this gigantic role: A program of Western-style modernization that would start off from the need to fundamentally reeducate the Chinese populace to become “civilized” citizens in their morals, their social customs, and their engagement for the nation; a strong use of all available media to spread and stabilize the message and increase public recognition of both message and person; the understanding that this person would operate on the international stage and that international recognition would be crucial for acceptance within the country; a Party organization focused on and held together by this leader in an autocratic manner; and, finally, the development of the ingredients of a political package associated with this leader that overcame the vagaries of mortality, could be dissociated from the daily turbulence, and provide the wherewithal for an icon of lasting value and impact such as that of George Washington.

The focus on this icon shifts the time sequence. Instead of the real man, who then is transformed into an icon and image as a later and secondary thing, the real man is behaving in anticipation of the features of the eventual icon, that is, the iconic features precede and inform his behavior. The amazing consistency of Sun’s expression and dress in official photographs as well as in his image that was then standardized after 1928 must be seen as a sign of this sequence inversion. The efforts made by the new KMT leadership after Sun’s death to standardize this image followed the basic track he himself had laid out, even if some features, such as the friendship with the Soviet Union, were deleted. The emphasis on the internationality of Sun’s image is also visible in the design of Sun’s mausoleum by an American trained architect, of the new capital to be built below it, designed by Murphy, the American teacher of this architect, and, last but not least, in the selection of the artists for the two sculptures of Sun in the *Zhongshan ling*. Paul Landowski sculpted the sitting statue in the entrance hall, and he is known for his *Cristo Redentor* (1922–1931) above Rio de Janeiro and for his big installation *Temple de l’Homme* for the Paris *Exhibition des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels* (1925). The statue replacing the embalmed body is by Koci, a Czech sculptor living in China, who dealt with Chinese themes such as a sculpture of the woman revolutionary Qiu Jin 秋瑾 (1875–1907), and one of a rickshaw puller.

The pattern established by and for Sun Yat-sen was directly emulated by the Chinese communists with one significant difference. The image of Mao Zedong was systematically developed in the communist-held areas and

after 1949 in the PRC while Mao was alive. With this long coexistence of the Olympian image of a post-apotheosis Mao and the real living thing the former had to cope with a lot of pollution, from which to this day it has not really cleansed itself.

Acknowledgements

The main contents of this study were presented at Boston University and Harvard University. I have greatly benefited from the encouragement, suggestions, and critiques of the participants in these events. Thanks are also due to my fellow editors and Russell Ó Riagáin for their suggestions, clarifications, and additions on the Chinese, Roman, and US-American aspects of the article.