

Article

The Re-Discovery of the *Bulletin of Chinese Studies* and the Development of Traditional Chinese Studies at Christian Universities in Huaxiba

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Abstract: During the Second World War, the integration of science and humanities, as well as the integration of Guoxue (Traditional Chinese Studies) and Western learning, became a central issue in academia in China. With the support of the Harvard–Yenching Institute, Christian universities such as Cheeloo University, Ginling College, Nanking University, West China Union University, and Yenching University, which had gathered in Huaxiba in Chengdu during the war, were committed to bridging the gap between science and Guoxue. They founded the “East-West Cultural Studies Society” with the aim of attracting scholars from both domestic and international backgrounds, facilitating dialogue and the convergence of Chinese and Western academic traditions. Pioneering a novel approach that infused traditional Guoxue with scientific inquiry, they established the *Bulletin of Chinese Studies*, which swiftly rose to a distinguished position within Guoxue research amid the tumultuous wartime milieu. This article endeavors to, within the diverse context of the modern evolution of the origins of and changes in Guoxue research, undertake a comprehensive examination of the objectives and scope of the *Bulletin of Chinese Studies* through a nuanced perspective that fuses globalization and localization. The overarching goal is to delve into the profound significance of Guoxue research within Christian universities, with a central focus on propelling substantial progress in the potential fusion of Chinese and Western academic disciplines.



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1. Introduction

In the 1990s, there was a surge in interest in the study of “Guoxue” (traditional Chinese Studies, 國學) in academic circles in China. Scholars from various schools of thought had different interpretations of Guoxue: some considered it a general term for traditional Chinese scholarship, while others viewed it narrowly as classical studies. Many of these viewpoints involved a sense of revitalizing tradition. In ancient China, Guoxue often referred to educational institutions like the Imperial Academy (國子監). From an academic perspective, Guoxue was a new concept introduced in the late Qing Dynasty under the influence of Japan. The development of modern Guoxue research can be divided into three stages: the late Qing period, the 1910s–1920s, and the 1930s–1950s. The past thirty years have seen significant progress in modern Guoxue research, particularly about the National Essence School (國粹派) and the Movement of Reorganizing National Heritage (整理國故運動), greatly enriching the historiography of modern Chinese academic thought. However, existing research has focused on methods and materials, distinguishing between Chinese and Western scholarship, new culture and old traditions, and examining scholars’ academic and ideological positions. In terms of academic trends, it is widely believed in the current academic community that after the establishment of academic disciplines as mainstream in the 1930s, the issue of Guoxue is no longer significant, and existing studies have mainly focused on institutions and scholars like Wuxi Guozhuan (The College of Chinese

Culture, 無錫國學專修學校) and Zhang Taiyan's Academy of Guoxue (章氏國學講習會), without fully examining the significance of Guoxue research in the transformation of modern Chinese scholarship in the 1930s and 1940s. However, after the trend passes, it often requires systematic and in-depth research to support it. In the 1930s and 1940s, Guoxue research institutions and groups were still quite active, with the emergence of many Guoxue journals and works. The debates on reading classics, Chinese cultural identity, and the sinicization of scholarship all involved significant intellectual discussions, in which the Harvard–Yenching Institute played a crucial role by supporting many Christian universities in Guoxue research, becoming an important component of Guoxue research in the 1930s and 1940s. This article focuses on the overall landscape of Guoxue research in the 1930s and 1940s, highlighting the differences in academic views, academic debates, and academic atmosphere shifts within the community of the *Bulletin of Chinese Studies* (中國文化研究匯刊).

2. Between Chinese and Western Learning

In the process of the formation of modern nation-states, universities emerged as the primary institutions for knowledge production. The state also steered university disciplines toward practical applications, aligning them with the demands of the modern societal division of labor. Scientific positivism, modeled after Newtonian mechanics, gradually took precedence, with objectivity, empiricism, and universality becoming the criteria for scientific knowledge. During the late Qing period, Christian universities became important intermediaries for the transmission of Western knowledge to China, aiming to cultivate individuals who were exposed to Christian doctrine and natural science education and also familiar with Chinese culture in order to influence Chinese society. In 1877, protestant missionaries in China held the first national conference in Shanghai, proposing to provide higher Christian education for China. To achieve this, the School and Textbook Series Committee (益智書會) was established to compile textbooks for schools at all levels, attempting to guide China with Western civilization. In 1890, the second protestant missionary conference in China accelerated the secularization of church education. Despite missionaries' opposition to completely separating education from the gospel, they began to move toward professionalizing education within the missionary framework. Pan Shenwen (潘慎文), from the perspective of understanding Chinese history, culture, and language for the purpose of missionary work, proposed that the study of Confucian classics should not only have a place in church schools and universities but should occupy an important position as well. Although he advocated for giving equal status to Chinese classics, Christian books, and Western natural science, he prioritized the importance of studying Christian books, Western science, and then Chinese classics, suggesting annotating Chinese classics with Christian doctrine (Zhu and Gao 1993, pp. 126–32). However, the education in church schools was mainly focused on Western knowledge, specifically science and Christianity, teaching Western knowledge and Chinese culture separately. The church schools did not actively participate in the integration of Chinese and modern Western academic trends, limiting the impact of church schools on the overall cultural transformation of Chinese society, especially in terms of educational system establishment and evolution, contributing rather limitedly and remaining marginalized for a long period (Sang 2015, p. 73).

After the First Sino-Japanese War (甲午戰爭), facing the decline of Confucianism, Qing officials and scholars emphasized that Confucianism should be the basis for ethics, with Chinese classics as the foundation and Western knowledge as application. However, traditional Chinese scholarship was based on the principle of integrating learning with practice; once Confucianism could not be applied practically, the orthodox position of Confucianism (儒學) and classical studies (經學) naturally began to waver. Following this line of thought, in the late Qing and early Republic of China, amidst debates between Chinese and Western learning (中學與西學), discussions on National Essence (國粹) and Westernization, the Chinese academic community began to reorganize traditional learning, trying to distinguish between Guoxue and Junxue (Monarchic Studies, 君學). The view of

Guoxue in the late Qing and early Republic of China presented a trend that went beyond Confucianism, with new and old scholars categorizing traditional learning by referencing Western disciplines. In the 1920s, due to the prominent advocacy of the Movement of Reorganizing National Tradition by figures like Hu Shi (胡適) during the New Culture Movement (新文化運動), Guoxue research became fashionable. In 1923, members of the School of Sinological Research at Peking University (北大國學門) published the “Inaugural Declaration of the Journal of Sinological Studies”, proposing to “broaden the scope of Guoxue research with a historical perspective”, “systematically organize the materials for Guoxue research”, and “use comparative studies to assist in the organization and interpretation of Guoxue materials” (Hu 1923, p. 16). Western learning became a reference point for Guoxue, while “science” became the keyword for Reorganizing National Tradition. This declaration immediately attracted attention in the academic community, sparking a new wave of enthusiasm for Guoxue, with the influx of European and American scientific positivism. The Xueheng Faction (學衡派) at National Southeastern University (東南大學), composed of returnees from overseas, advocated for the revitalization of National Essence while integrating new knowledge, engaging in debates with figures like Hu Shi regarding the purity of academic research and the orthodox position of incorporating Western learning, opposing Hu Shi’s advocacy of using “scientific methods” to lead all areas (Xu 2006). In the wave of the Movement of Reorganizing National Heritage, the role of Christian universities remained on the periphery. In 1922, the China Education Commission (基督教教育調查團) led by Ernest D. Burton conducted a comprehensive investigation of Chinese Christian education, pointing out that cooperation and improvement were the future directions for Christian universities in China, and proposed a new slogan of “more efficiency, more Christianization, and more Sinicization” (China Educational Commission 1922, pp. 6–13). The Anti-Christianity Movement further questioned the model of “Western Learning for Fundamental principles, Chinese Learning for Practical Application” (西體中用) in Christian universities.

At this time, Harvard University and the Hall Fund began research on Eastern civilizations, particularly China, including history, archaeology, religion, literature, anthropology, art, linguistics, and philosophy. By applying scientific methods to study Chinese culture and understand Chinese civilization, they aimed to avoid the confusion caused by radical nationalism and to enrich the understanding of modern civilization (Harvard University and Peking University 1925). In the end, the Harvard–Yenching Institute was established and chose to collaborate with universities such as Yenching University (燕京大學) in the hope of elevating the study of Chinese classics at Yenching University to a level higher than any other Chinese academic institution (Stuart 1954, pp. 63–64). The Harvard–Yenching Institute aimed to enhance teaching and research competence and conduct comprehensive studies on Chinese culture. At the same time, it ensured high-quality sources of students, requiring students to have a genuine interest in Chinese history and culture with a good command of research skills. The Harvard–Yenching Institute sought to bridge the past and present, East and West, and to help continue or rebuild Chinese culture through scientific research to address the issues encountered in China’s transition to modernization. On 10 February 1928, Yenching University established the Institute of Guoxue, with the aim of “researching Chinese classics, bridging Chinese and Western cultures”, appointing Chen Yuan (陳垣) as its director. The mentors and researchers at the Institute of Chinese Classics at Yenching University included Gu Jiegang (顧頡剛), Rong Geng (容庚), Huang Zitong (黃子通), Xu Dishan (許地山), Guo Shaoyu (郭紹虞), Zhang Xinglang (張星娘), among others, propelling Yenching University to become a major hub for international Guoxue research (Tao and Wu 1998, pp. 117–21).

During the late Qing Dynasty and early Republic of China, scholars endeavored to reconstruct Guoxue. The term “Ti” (the body, 體) in traditional Chinese learning gradually evolved into “Gu” (the Heritage, 故), as the Chinese academic system was completely replaced by modern Western specialized disciplines. The Movement of Reorganizing National Heritage aimed to establish a scientific academic system to uphold and implement

the ideas of the New Culture Movement. The scientific approach of Guoxue research led to the replacement of the self-contained Chinese cultural system with modern academic disciplines and the Western academic system. In the wave of Westernization of Chinese learning, it may seem untimely to find an autonomous position for Chinese learning which can also be used to approach Western learning, but it was still an undercurrent of modern academic transformation. Some scholars have advocated that the Movement of Reorganizing National Heritage should not blindly imitate Western scholarship but make contributions to world scholarship. The projects of the Harvard–Yenching Institute encouraged and sponsored Christian universities to emphasize Chinese classical texts for the preservation of the essence of Chinese culture, making Chinese culture a top priority in teaching and research at various institutions. However, the relationship between Chinese learning and Western learning has long been a thorny issue for all parties involved. There is significant tension between the academic philosophy of the Harvard–Yenching Institute and the scholarly interests of the funded scholars.

3. From Guoxue to Chinese Culture

According to the distribution plan of the American Foreign Education Fund established by the Hall Fund in October 1928, six universities in China could receive funding to implement the “Cultural Engineering” project of the Harvard–Yenching Institute. This project consciously formulated plans to create new cultures, promote the construction of national identity, reconstruct cultural traditions through relatively scientific and “objective” research, promote social development, and ultimately facilitate the penetration of Western science into Chinese life (Fan 2014, pp. 9–11).

In 1930, Nanking University (金陵大學, known in Chinese as Jinling University, Jinling being the ancient name of Nanking) established the Institute of Chinese Culture with four objectives: to research and interpret the significance of Chinese culture, to cultivate specialized talents in researching Chinese culture, to assist the School of Liberal Arts in developing courses on Chinese culture, and to provide convenience for the faculty and students to research Chinese culture. The research direction of the institute mainly focused on history, philosophy, Chinese cultural studies, bibliography, and Chinese painting, with an emphasis on ancient Chinese history, especially the study of the Ming Dynasty. Director Luan Diaofu (樂調甫) of the Institute of Guoxue at Cheeloo University (齊魯大學國學研究所) emphasized that the key to a university lies in its ability to cultivate specialized talents and to form its own distinctive academic research. Shandong is the land of Cheeloo, and Cheeloo culture (齊魯文化) is an important component of Chinese culture. The Institute of Guoxue at Cheeloo University took Cheeloo culture as an important research area and published *A Compilation of Guoxue* (《國學彙編》), focusing on the collation of historical texts and the interpretation of classics (Shang 2018, pp. 125–28). West China Union University (華西協和大學) always advocated absorbing the strengths of Western culture as well as promoting the unique spirit of Chinese culture. Its many senior scholars concentrated on teaching Chinese classics and, in 1933, founded *The Chinese Journal* (Huaxi Xuebao, 《華西學報》), which included sections such as famous quotations, academic genres, literature and history, geography, stories, essays, and rhymes, all with a strong traditional academic flavor. Lingnan University (嶺南大學) and Fukien Christian University (福建協和大學) similarly stressed teaching and researching local history and culture.

The Harvard–Yenching Institute required the universities to be as proficient as possible in the field of Chinese culture teaching. All of the universities should focus on undergraduate education in the field of Chinese cultural studies, and graduate education should be within an appropriate scope. The Harvard–Yenching Institute was originally intended to improve Guoxue research at Yenching University, with the other five universities focusing on teaching. However, a wave of Guoxue research was sparked unexpectedly at various universities. Wang Zhixin (王治心), the head of the Chinese Department at Fukien Christian University, emphasized in the inaugural issue of *Guoxue Journal* (《國學雜誌》)

that Dr. Lucius C. Porter from Yenching University had mentioned, “For those who enjoy studying Guoxue, they can be sent to Harvard University in the United States for research”. This greatly stimulated the national sentiments of teachers and students, who believed that “to study Guoxue in a foreign country” was a shameful embarrassment that should motivate them to vigorously carry out Guoxue research and open up new frontiers for Guoxue. “We are Chinese, and we should not pass on the responsibility of promoting Chinese knowledge to foreigners” (Z. Wang 1933, p. 1). At the same time, the concept of Guoxue among teachers and students at various universities varied greatly, and not all Christian universities that received funding named their research institutions with the two Chinese characters “Guoxue”. William Hung (洪業) was always against the concept of Guoxue, believing that “knowledge should have no boundaries; the so-called Guoxue should not be self-indulgent but should be categorized into various departments according to disciplines. Just as European science, literature, history, etc., cannot be generically classified as ‘European Studies’.” William Hung firmly believed that Chinese knowledge should be studied by scholars with modern training and a global perspective and advocated for the dissolution of the Institute of Guoxue. Due to different opinions, poor enrollment, and an unregistered enrollment system, the Institute of Guoxue of Yenching University was officially abolished in April of 1932 (L. Wang 2018, pp. 34–35).

The Harvard–Yenching Institute hoped that universities receiving funding would announce relevant courses and publish research reports in journals which should be regularly mailed to the supervisory department; thus, guidance could be provided. The Harvard–Yenching Institute encouraged studies of China with the interests and methods of the United States. Its academic interests were fully reflected in the selection of the “President” of the Institute. The Harvard–Yenching Institute once considered choosing Hu Shi as its president but this did not come to fruition due to certain reasons. The Harvard–Yenching Institute Council then planned to invite Paul Pelliot to preside over the Harvard–Yenching Institute, but Paul Pelliot recommended Serge Elisséeff. A.W. Hummel, an American scholar, was another candidate, “who is indeed a good choice, but as a scholar, he does not have the reputation that Dr. Serge Elisséeff has” (Chase 1933). Serge Elisséeff represented Paul Pelliot and the Paris orthodoxy in opening up French sinology in the United States, while A.W. Hummel was neutral, having neither affiliation with nor having received formal training from Paul Pelliot or other distinguished sinologists.

Serge Elisséeff planned the Harvard East Asian Studies curriculum and maintained relationships with universities in China, cultivating sinologists for the United States. At the annual dinner of the Joint Board of Trustees of Chinese Christian Universities in 1936, Serge Elisséeff stated: “Sinology is the study of China through Chinese texts”, and “Chinese scholars are more important than Western sinologists, which is completely reasonable. However, Western sinologists who have received formal training have already written important academic works and made valuable contributions”; “although Chinese scholars can fully understand Chinese Buddhist classics, if they do not understand Sanskrit, they will face serious obstacles. Scholars like Alexander von Stael-Holstein, working with lamas, utilizing Manchu, Mongolian, Tibetan, and Sanskrit works, can truly contribute to our knowledge of Chinese Buddhism” (Elisséeff 1936). Serge Elisséeff insisted on transplanting the fading historical-linguistic tradition in Europe to East Asian Studies, linguistics, and philology in the United States. In 1937, the full-scale War of Resistance Against Japan broke out, and Christian universities successively moved southwest, bringing the geographic space for communication and cooperation closer. During the war, Serge Elisséeff always hoped to strengthen the supervision and control of the Harvard–Yenching Institute’s work in China. He did not support funding for scholars with traditional approaches, believing that they did not pay enough attention to Western research methods. He requested that each school hire scholars who are educated in the West to ensure the high quality of teaching and research. Gu Jiegang was invited to serve as the director of the Institute of Guoxue at Cheeloo University. Gu planned to use the Hall Fund to gather well-known scholars to write papers and publish monographs to enhance the academic status

of the Institute of Guoxue. Gu led the organization of the *Twenty-Four Histories* (二十四史), planning to first compile various specialized historical materials collections, such as race, religion, politics, military, economy, society, transportation, thought, literature, etc. Based on this, he would write a general history of China and various specialized histories to guide modern historical studies on the right track. In 1940, West China Union University established the Institute of Chinese Cultural Studies, realizing the transition from old-fashioned scholars to new intellectuals. Wen You (聞宥) was appointed as the director. Lü Shuxiang (呂叔湘), Han Rulin (韓儒林), and Liu Chaoyang (劉朝陽) were appointed as researchers, and Chen Yinke (陳寅恪), Dong Zuobin (董作賓), Liu Xian (劉鹹), Li Fanggui (李方桂), etc. were appointed as special researchers.

Serge Elisséeff, as the president of the Harvard–Yenching Institute, suggested that the research institutes of the three Christian universities, all on the campus of West China Union University, should concentrate their efforts on publishing a single academic journal. In late October 1941, Dr. Charles Stelle, sent by the Harvard–Yenching Institute, visited the three universities in Huaxiba. The Harvard–Yenching Institute hoped that Nanking University, Cheeloo University, and West China Union University would jointly publish the *Guoxue Journal* (《國學學報》), planning to cancel their own journals. Among them, after two issues each, *Cheeloo Journal* (《齊魯學報》) and *Cheeloo Chinese Studies Quarterly* (《齊大國學季刊》) were discontinued, while *Ze Shan Bi-weekly* (《責善半月刊》) was retained after great efforts by Gu Jiegang because of its meeting people's need for popular reading material with an academic background (Cheeloo University 1941). Later, due to tight wartime budgets, the three universities cooperated to establish the *Bulletin of Chinese Studies*. Li Xiaoyuan, the director of the Institute of Chinese Culture Studies at Nanking University, hoped that this new partnership could continue into the future (Institute of Chinese Culture Studies 1941). In 1943, Yenching University joined in, and the editing duties were taken turns by the research institutes of the four universities. The Harvard–Yenching Institute believed that this move was not only to help improve the standards of Chinese publications but also to eliminate publications that did not meet quality and academic standards.

The *Bulletin of Chinese Studies* aimed to form a unique academic community, stating that the journal exclusively published research by the institute's full-time staff and did not accept external submissions. The articles were divided into four categories: (1) research papers, (2) investigation reports, (3) important historical materials, and (4) book reviews. Each issue was followed by summaries in both Chinese and Western languages, emphasizing the originality and copyright awareness of the research. Texts that had been published elsewhere were not allowed to be reprinted, and the copyright of the journal belonged to the research institutes, prohibiting reproduction elsewhere. However, the distribution of the *Bulletin of Chinese Studies* encountered significant difficulties (T. Zhang 2020, pp. 3312–449). In 1944, the editorial committee of the journal issued a notice that all printed copies were stored in Shanghai and would be rapidly distributed once transportation resumed. The Harvard–Yenching Institute hoped to establish a common base for the studies of China based on the strengths of the four universities. Studies of China should include linguistics, literature, history, geography, and archaeology. This was not only the research focus of the four universities but also the foundation for teaching, helping students appreciate Chinese literature, history, art, and archaeology and prepare for post-war work. High-level talents should be particularly cultivated in the field of history and archaeology (Harvard–Yenching Institute 1942). The *Bulletin of Chinese Studies*, as a cooperation of several universities in Huaxiba, involved multiple fields such as history, folklore, language, literature, art, ethnicity, and archaeology. Given that the historical and cultural heritage of western China had long been neglected, there was great potential for research space on western China. The goal of the Movement of Reorganizing National Heritage was to compile Chinese cultural history. The writing and function of cultural history involved reconstructing Chinese culture with an objective scientific method, studying moral education through introspection and practical learning, and transforming traditional moral and his-

torical studies. Publications by Nanking University, Cheeloo University, and West China Union University often promoted the old school of thought, focusing on the study of Confucian classics with annotations. However, the *Bulletin of Chinese Studies* was, to a certain extent, based on but not limited to the historical and linguistic methodologies advocated by the Harvard–Yenching Institute. It mainly emphasized tracing the historical and cultural origins and developments of China through newly discovered documents, studying major aspects of Chinese culture from a national and border perspective. The linguistic and textual studies of Wen You and Lu Shuxiang, the ancient historical research of Hu Houxuan and Xu Zhongshu, the ethnic studies of Han Rulin, Wang Yitong, and Liu Mingshu, and the literary and historical research of Chen Yinque and Miao Yue all stood as exemplary works. By 1951, the Institute of Chinese Cultural Studies of West China Union University independently published the tenth issue. The editorial committee at that time included Zhen Shangling (甄尚靈), Wen You, Zhao Weibang (趙衛邦), and Miao Yue, proposing that, in the future, the main focus should be research on Chinese nationalities, languages, history, antiques, etc., from the perspective of Marxism–Leninism and that special attention should be paid to practical issues of southwest China. Soon after, the *Bulletin of Chinese Studies* was terminated.

The joint effort of founding the *Bulletin of Chinese Studies* is both a response to the then situation and a vivid reflection of the research interests and methods of the sponsored groups. The concept of Guoxue in the late Qing and early Republic of China has attracted widespread attention but with much ambiguity. Guoxue, Guogu (National Essence, 國故), and Guoguxue (National Essence Studies, 國故學) coexisted in the academic community. Guoxue could refer to the promotion of national glory and the preservation of national essence; therefore, it could be seen as a shorthand for Guoguxue. The former focused on the positive promotion of China's past historical culture, while the latter aimed to sever the organic connection between traditional spiritual beliefs and the new academic system, as well as modern life. The distinction in nomenclature not only implied a difference in the temporal and spatial definition of the research object but also led to the divergence of research methods and academic concepts. In the early 1930s, scholars, who regarded specialization as scientific, criticized Guoxue for being bounded by the nation, not classified by discipline, and insufficient to become modern academic research. They advocated “overthrowing Guoxue” (打倒國學) and using new methods from the new era, especially in philosophy, literature, and history, to sort out the traditional scholarship. Terms such as Chinese scholarship and Chinese Cultural Studies began to replace Guoxue, establishing a more inclusive and open way to build a modern Chinese academic paradigm. If the *Bulletin of Chinese Studies* is placed in the context of the fusion of old and new academic trends in Southwest China during wartime and the evolution of modern Guoxue, it can be seen that this journal attempted to integrate history, archaeology, and language and strove to seek its characteristics and maintain a balance between the Harvard–Yenching Institute and other institutions in terms of Guoxue research.

4. The Diverse Paths and Objectives of Guoxue Research

During the period of comprehensive resistance to Japanese aggression, various cultural and educational institutions moved to Sichuan, making Chengdu one of the wartime cultural centers. The academic style of these institutions was predominantly “new”, which was looked down upon by the scholars of the old generation in Sichuan. Cheng Qianfan (程千帆) once recalled: “On one hand, the outsiders had no idea about the capabilities of scholars of Sichuan, and on the other hand, the scholars of Sichuan looked down upon these outsiders, being proud of their own achievements” (Cheng 2000, p. 25). In the summer of 1941, Luo Changpei (羅常培), along with Mei Yiqi (梅貽琦) and Zheng Tianting (鄭天挺), deeply felt the different academic styles during their inspection of the education system in Sichuan. The graduation theses of students in the Chinese Literature Department of Sichuan University often focused on works such as *The Annals of Lü Buwei with Annotations* (Lǚshì Chūnqiū Jiàozhù, 《呂氏春秋校注》), *The Shuowen Jiezi with Segmental*

Annotations and Corrections (Shuōwén Duànzhù Jiàozhèng, 《說文段注校正》), and *Examination of Citations in the Zuo Zhuan* (Zuǒzhuàn Yīn Jīng Kǎo, 《左傳引經考》), reflecting the academic traditions of Sichuan. In contrast, when examining the three Christian universities in Huaxiba, it was noted that Cheeloo University tended to focus more on history, Nanking University on archaeology, and West China Union University on language; and there were no strict boundaries between them, as figures like Gu Jiegang, Chen Zhongfan (陳鐘凡), Qian Mu (錢穆), Wen You, Lu Shuxiang, and Li Xiaoyuan (李小緣) were all old acquaintances (Luo 1996, pp. 55–56). The Chinese Literature Department of Sichuan University consisted mostly of “scholars of the old generation” while the research institutes of those Christian universities had more “old acquaintances”. Luo Changpei felt not only the contrast between old and new academic styles but also the closeness or distance in interpersonal relationships as if he were walking between two worlds. In reality, the main challenge faced by the Christian universities in Huaxiba was the integration of old learning and new learning.

West China Union University claimed to have the most robust faculty in Guoxue research in the southwest of China, maintaining a balance between new and old scholars and upholding a high academic research standard. However, in the eyes of the progressive scholars, the Chinese Literature Department of West China Union University had “many conservative and useless individuals” who were immersed in the *Jing Shi Zi Ji* (經史子集) and despised scientific methods and neglected the essence and evolution of history and culture. Their teaching and research focused on the appreciation of literary works while disregarding tools such as “Index” for research purposes. In a letter from Zheng Dekun (鄭德坤) to Serge Elisséeff, it was pointed out that the four Christian universities did not focus on undergraduate teaching as designated by the Harvard–Yenching Institute, and there was escalating conflict between old and new within the Chinese Literature Department of West China Union University, with teachers forming their own factions; the Institute of Chinese Culture was also very conservative (Zheng 1942). During the academic year of 1942–1943, in response to the request of the Harvard–Yenching Institute, West China Union University temporarily closed the Institute of Chinese Culture, shifting its research tasks to the Chinese Literature Department and the Archaeological Museum. This move met fierce opposition, with faculty and students even distributing bilingual leaflets to criticize Harvard–Yenching Institute’s policy as “cultural imperialism” and threatening to leave the university permanently (Fan 2014, pp. 142–44). In August 1943, the Institute of Guoxue was established at West China Union University, initiated by senior scholars from the Chinese Literature Department such as Li Zhi (李植), Lin Sijin (林思進), Pang Shizhou (龐石帚), and Zhong Zhiju (鐘稚矩), with Li Zhi appointed as the director. A fundraising announcement for the Institute stated: “West China Union University is one of the earliest universities established in Chengdu. Today, with the rapid advancements in modern science, there is a need to seek knowledge from the foreign world. However, traditional Chinese classics cover a wide range, encompassing various schools of thought, political and educational systems of past dynasties, rituals and customs, cultural heritage, and institutional changes. If one seeks to understand the reasons behind the rise and fall of Chinese history and culture, it is essential to start from here” (L. Zhang 2013, p. 413).

Fu Sinian (傅斯年) once said: “The scholars of the old generation at Sichuan University often think that the New Culture Movement followers have not read Chinese books, but in fact, we have all put in hard work studying the classics. We have our own methods of scholarship, while they have their own reasoning” (Huang 1986, p. 1743). Fu’s words are thought-provoking. “We” have “our methods of scholarship”, while “they” have “their reasoning”, indicating that the “scholars of the old generation”, “Chinese books”, and “reasoning” are one category, while “we”, “classics”, and “methods” are another category. Fu’s words also suggest that the purpose of studying the classics is to “innovate.” The divergence lies in whether the focus is on “learning from books” or “learning books.” Since Hu Shi’s Movement of Reorganizing National Heritage, scholars have tended to categorize “Chinese books” into new and different academic disciplines and methods, con-

sidering “books” as “classics” or “national heritages,” often overlooking the original “reasoning” within the books. As early as the 1920s, Song Yuren (宋育仁) criticized scholars like Hu Shi and proposed that classical studies is “learning from books” rather than considering books as the essence of learning while Hu Shi’s advocacy for the Movement of Reorganizing National Heritage focused solely on the surface of Chinese scholarship. In other words, the books themselves contain their own “reasoning”, and the study of Chinese scholarship should involve a deep exploration of the “reasoning” within. The Six Classics (六經) contain profound meanings and subtle nuances, which, when integrated into practice, can educate the masses (Q. Wen 1924, p. 41).

As an important part of the New Culture Movement, Hu Shi and Gu Jiegang advocated the “Movement of Reorganizing National Heritage” and “Historical Criticism Movement (古史辨運動)” and actively supported the “New Thought” of anti-Confucianism with a serious academic approach. Its starting point lies in a return to the original classics, reaching new heights on the basis of the Qian-Jia Hanxue (乾嘉漢學). In the Movement of Reorganizing National Heritage, the new generation of scholars took Chinese cultural history as the system of Guoxue, foreshadowing the reorganization of Guoxue with a modern disciplinary meaning of “historiography.” As Gu Jiegang stated, Guoxue is the history of China, a Chinese part of historical science, and research on Guoxue lies in using scientific methods to handle the materials of Chinese history rather than aiming to create a national essence theory. Gu’s examination of ancient history aimed to resolve the crux of Confucian studies by transforming classics into historical materials (Gu 1926, p. 11). He expressed, “born in this age, and our task is to bring an end to Confucian studies and open up the field of ancient history. Only by clarifying the classics can we write the history of Chinese culture; otherwise, we can only understand the outer layer of Chinese culture without grasping its core, which is of no benefit” (Gu 2011, pp. 350–51). Gu regarded the historical and cultural evolution contained in the classics as the inner core of Chinese culture. In the inaugural issue of the *Bulletin of Chinese Studies*, Gu clearly stated that without thorough destruction, there can be no rational construction. Guided by the goal of seeking truth, he critically reshaped the relationship between the ancient State of Shu and the Central Plains, emphasizing that the culture of ancient Shu developed independently and only merged with Central Plains culture after the Warring States period (Gu 1941, p. 174).

Wen You believed that Guoxue must first be classified and that relying entirely on traditional academic categories or modern academic categories would both have biases. The shortcomings of the old academic classification from the Seven Category (七略) to the Si Bu (四部) lie in only valuing form and not emphasizing essence. Guoxue should be divided into eight categories: language, philosophy, history and geography, literature, fine arts, museum studies, rites and music, and mathematics and technology. The first three are the prerequisites for studying all aspects of Guoxue and also the basic content of studying all aspects of Guoxue. Philosophy in a broad sense is the general term for all thoughts, the outline of all academics, and one must first understand philosophy to comprehend its origins. History is the total accumulation of all of the past, combining time and space, and complementing each other. Only by understanding history and geography first can one penetrate the cultural background. Language is a tool, and today it has become a specialized discipline, the foundation of the study of Guoxue (Y. Wen 1927). Wang Guowei (王國維) proposed the combination of underground material and above-ground documents, the integration of new and old historical materials, shedding a new light on Guoxue. Based on this, questioning the reliability of evidence could lead to new knowledge (Y. Wen 1928). Language is an important feature that constitutes a nation, and the harmonization of different ethnic groups relies on the harmonization of cultures, with the first medium of fusion being language. The relationship between language and culture is complementary and mutually inspiring. Wen You, Lü Xiang, and other scholars’ academic papers in the *Bulletin of Chinese Studies* involve ethnic languages such as Qiang and Sino-Tibetan languages, providing important references for the study of ethnic language, historical and cultural origins, and social forms.

Gu Jiegang and Wen You, although advocating that academic research should not always have a narrow focus on immediate practicality, did not mean to neglect research on the intrinsic spirit and characteristics of Chinese culture. European sinologists should be able to read Chinese classical works skillfully and make full use of Chinese reference books and literature. The Harvard–Yenching Institute praised William Hung’s compilation of the *Sinological Index Series* (漢學引得) which allowed several generations of Chinese and foreign scholars who had not received classical Confucian education to understand China’s history and cultural heritage. Although Serge Elisséeff sometimes believed that the *Sinological Index Series* was not high-level academic research, he also praised its contribution to the study of Chinese culture more than once and hoped to compile a comprehensive Chinese–English dictionary by absorbing the research results of the Chinese and foreign academic communities in a Western manner. Still, Serge Elisséeff thought that according to the memorandum, universities that received funding should focus on undergraduate teaching, with research activities to be conducted only in addition to teaching duties (Elisséeff 1942). William Hung’s academic research greatly benefited from the support of the Harvard–Yenching Institute, and the *Sinological Index Series* was highly regarded by French sinologists. However, by adhering too closely to the instructions of the Harvard–Yenching Institute, his ambition to integrate Chinese and Western perspectives and combine analysis with synthesis in the humanities was unsustainable. Yenching University was even perceived as a mere copycat of Harvard University, and Chinese historiography merely served as the backdrop for Serge Elisséeff’s “Sinology”. In this regard, Gu Jiegang held reservations and still hoped to write a general history of China. Wen You investigated the distribution of languages in the southwest of China, pointing out that “it is absolutely ineffective to solve the problem of educating these border residents in a single, simple way”, and “we should first understand their languages” in order to “prescribe the right medicine” and “cure the disease”, and specialized scholars should engage in rigorous research firstly to “clearly understand their languages” (Y. Wen 1942, p. 11). The scientific historical school aimed to construct the internal cultural evolutionary process with historiography, build the framework of Chinese cultural history, and not confine itself to Confucianism for the re-establishment of Chinese culture. During the period of the Republic of China, Guo Binhe (郭斌龢) proposed studying Chinese culture systematically with Western learning, somewhat likening China to the civilizations of Egypt and Babylon. Using modern academic methods to study certain details of Chinese culture may be precise and useful, but often lacks empathy, “without appreciation, experience or enjoyment, let alone seeking to promote and enhance”; “Chinese scholars cannot study in this way” (Department of Chinese Literature of Zhejiang University 1939).

The question of balancing Chinese and Western civilizations has naturally existed since the beginning of modern Chinese–Western exchanges. World War II made this issue even more urgent, forcing Western academia to address it as well. During the War, some professors from the University of Oxford and the University of Cambridge in the United Kingdom once sent a letter to professors of the five Christian universities in Huaxiba, with the title “The Role of Traditional Chinese Culture in Dealing with National Crisis” (《中國傳統文化在應付國難時的作用》). Professors of the five universities nominated Mr. Gu Jiegang to draft the reply, which was ultimately written by Wei Mingjing (魏明經). The letter was first presented to Luo Zhongshu (羅忠恕), Dean of the School of Literature at West China Union University, and Liu Guojun (劉國鈞), Dean of the School of Literature at Ginling College. Both were in charge of promoting Sino-British cultural exchanges. Later, Qian Mu edited the letter, which was translated into English by Luo and others and finally presented to the professors of Oxford and Cambridge. In June of 1941, Luo initiated the establishment of the East–West Cultural Studies Society (東西文化學社) to facilitate communication between Chinese and Western cultures. During wartime, both the church and Christian universities fully recognized the importance of studying Chinese history and its cultural essence. In terms of Sinology or the studies of China in the world, professional Sinology represented by France tended to focus on researching Chinese his-

tory and culture from the perspectives of language, texts, and historical documents. Serge Elisséeff planned the teaching and research of the Christian universities in Huaxiba with this guiding principle. However, regional studies were gradually emerging, challenging the orthodox views of Sinology. In terms of the debate between the new and old in the Chinese academic community, publications of those Christian universities, such as *The Chinese Journal* of West China Union University and *Siwen* of the School of Literature of Nanking University, seemingly aimed to promote Chinese traditional culture through the study of Confucian ethics and principles. In the eyes of the new scholars, they may be seen as conservative and outdated. The *Bulletin of Chinese Studies* aimed to maintain a balance among various perspectives, advocating for inclusiveness, blending Eastern and Western, old and new. This journal not only complied with the academic principles of the Harvard–Yenching Institute but also refused to let Chinese culture become merely material or a footnote. It sought to explore the true meaning of Chinese culture, reveal its uniqueness, and avoid falling into narrow nationalism. Miao Yue advocated for the integration of Chinese and Western cultures, using literature to promote Chinese culture and improve social morals. “At a time of rapid change, revitalizing education and culture should be a top priority. Modern scholars who cling to old ways are narrow-minded, while those who blindly worship the West are superficial. We should promote the essence of Chinese culture accumulated over thousands of years, draw on the strengths of Western academic achievements, learn from the spirit of ancient Greek philosophers in pursuit of true knowledge, and pioneer a new culture” (Miao 1989, p. 83).

The New Culture Movement introduces a modern academic system, injecting new vitality into Chinese scholarship. Hu Shi and his followers focus on interpreting traditional thoughts with modern philosophy, explaining Chinese culture with Western theories, but they fail to find a path to balance Chinese and Western cultures and balance science and heritage. Chen Yinke proposes a cultural solution of achieving a balance between “absorbing foreign theories” and “not forgetting the national heritage”, emphasizing the complementary nature of opposites. Chinese cultural heritage not only holds historical value but also serves as the source of dialogue between Chinese and Western cultures and the innovation of a new culture. The *Bulletin of Chinese Studies* focuses on the study of the historical and cultural aspects of pre-Qin, Han, Tang, Song, Liao, Jin, and Yuan dynasties, not limited to historical verification but hoping to connect facts and thoughts, understand the heritage of and changes in Chinese national history and cultural spirit, reveal the relationship between people’s lives and social systems, and uncover the interactive mechanism between culture and society. By examining the source of historical culture with a penetrating perspective and focusing on the relationship between thought and practice, the *Bulletin of Chinese Studies* tries to seek the linkage between geographical environment, ethnic culture, institutional origins, and social changes and dynamically grasp cultural evolution in a historical context.

5. Conclusions

The educational philosophy employed by Christian universities in the late Qing and early Republic of China is “Western Learning for Fundamental principles, Chinese Learning for Practical Application”, which to some extent influences the leading role of Christian universities in the study of Chinese culture. However, this does not negate their pivotal role in introducing modern Western academic disciplines. In the Movement of Reorganizing National Heritage, the scientific history school’s attitude towards Guoxue has essentially abandoned the inherent mentality of preserving national essence. Guoxue is no longer seen as the unshakable foundation of scholarship, allowing scholars to freely adopt Western perspectives and reinterpret traditional knowledge with a Western outlook. The subdivision of Guoxue, the rejection of Confucian classics, and the replacement of classical studies by historiography have become key elements in the establishment of modern academic research. Hu Shi believes that the new perspectives and critical spirit brought by missionaries propel the process of modernization in China, and Western sinologists, with their new methods and materials, significantly advance the study of Chinese history

and culture, setting notable examples. But, for modern Guoxue research, there are still two schools: the old school “only has dead materials without explanation” and the new school only interprets Chinese materials with Western social science theories that originate from Western historical culture, a potentially dangerous approach. The new school puts China’s historical and cultural tradition in the external frameworks and risks misinterpretation; while the old school adheres to existing historical records without delving into the spiritual life of the people and social systems, resulting in stagnation (Bian 2010, p. 146). In the 1950s and 1960s, scholars in Europe and America continued to discuss the similarities and differences between Sinology and Western humanities. American scholars of the studies of China propose that Sinology is already outdated and advocate for the introduction of social scientific methods to study China. Sinologists often focus on language and textual studies, which may carry the flavor of old learning, while the social science approach is at risk of treating Chinese historical culture as a mere appendage to Western social science theories. During the 1930s and 1940s, scholars from different schools congregated at the Christian universities in Huaxiba. Despite the Harvard–Yenching Institute’s limited success in coordinating Guoxue research across these universities, its crucial financial support bolsters the diverse Guoxue research within these Christian institutions. The scholars of the *Bulletin of Chinese Studies* seek to explore new paths of studying Chinese culture between the new and the old, the Chinese and the Western: studying Chinese culture should not just talk about moral principles or eternal values; the promotion of cultural spirit must be based on objective facts; Chinese culture should not be viewed as universal laws or a footnote to modern theories; rather, there should be a diachronic exploration of the reality and inherent mechanisms of Chinese historical and cultural evolution, thus establishing a dynamic relationship of complementarity between science and Guoxue.

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