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Empire of Hygiene:  
The Quarantine Service of Chinese Maritime Customs 1873-1945

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**Empire of Hygiene: The Quarantine Service of the Chinese Maritime  
Customs, 1873-1945.**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Quarantine service is essential to the security of trade, and had inaugurated the public hygiene campaigns in modern China. The first attempt to enforce maritime quarantine was in 1448 in Venice. In England the first quarantine act was not passed until 1710. Quarantine as a special function of Chinese Maritime Service began from 1873 in Amoy and Shanghai wherein ships and Chinese migrant workers came back and forth from Southeast Asia where cholera rampaged in Thailand and Malaysia. The commissioner of the Amoy Customs witnessed such turmoil and deliberated the need of epidemic prevention. He then drafted the quarantine regulations which were supported by the concession of local consulates and were subsequently put into practice. Investigating the pursuit of Chinese modernity, this project delves into the way in which the issues, such as central and local controls, international health and national sovereignty, disease control and colonized body, unfolded within the discourse of public health and helped shape the development and transformation of Quarantine service of the Chinese Maritime Customs.

(Key words: public hygiene, Customs, quarantine, international health, national sovereignty, colonized body)

“人ノ思想一タヒ此點ニ格レハ則第一我ハ生物ノ一ニシテ人体的國家ト謂ヘル集合体ノ分子ナル。第二生物ノ爪牙角蹄鱗翼及毒腺ヲ有スルカ如ク人体的國家モ亦武備ナカルヘカラサル。第三生物ハ皆生命ヲ有シ衛生法テ有スルカ如ク至高有機体タル國家ハ人類ノ生理的集合体ナルカ、故ニ生命ヲ有シ衛生法テ有スヘキ。第四生物ノ榮養法アルカ如ク國家モ亦經濟法ナカルヘカラス此ノ理ニ通スルキハ則國家衛生法ヲ講スルノ必要ヲ感スル。” 後藤新平--『国家衛生原理』(1887)

This paper explores the historical development of quarantine service within the institution of Chinese Maritime Customs, which has been understudied in both fields of public health history and maritime history in modern China. Hence, this case study serves as an integrated approach to understand two genealogies of the public health history and the governmental-political history of geo-body in modern China.

China, though a late comer in its pursuit of modernity, has evolved to be integrated into the modern world through a full consciousness of the nation-state characterized by statistics and population management to define itself and its power. The developmental process of this full consciousness sets the stage for what Michel Foucault called a biopolitics, “that gave rise to comprehensive measures, statistical assessments, and interventions aimed at the entire social body or at groups as a whole” to achieve the goals of health, longevity, reproductivity, economy and security. These teleological objectives in turn justify the executive agency to decide, select and control the grouping of governable/ungovernable, fit/unfit, desirable/undesirable. However, such exercise of biopolitics in China did not garrison the lines of global racial distribution and differentiation, like most European countries and the Commonwealth states such as Australia.<sup>1</sup> In Chinese context, the notion of “interior frontier” marking the boundary of modern citizenship much appropriately illuminate our understanding the nationalization

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<sup>1</sup> See the excellent example in Alison Bashford’s work *Imperial Hygiene: A Critical History of Colonialism, Nationalism and Public Health*, (Palgrave MacMillian, 2004). However, Bashford’s book does not only explore the colonial practice of racial divide and the technology of securing the boundaries, enclosure and segregations of hygienic, eugenic, imperialist/nationalist imagination, she also probes into the practice of interior frontiers in the zone of tropics in Australian context.

process of quarantine service within the institution of Chinese Maritime Customs.

## **I. The Establishment of the Chinese Maritime Customs Service**

The ground-breaking creation of the Chinese Maritime Customs Service was a confluence force linking up the declining Qing empire and the expanding British empire in their efforts of securing the regional stability ravaged by the evangelical Taiping Rebellion, Muslim Rebellion and other religious insurgences in the second half of the nineteenth century. In the time of Boxer Rebellion, the Customs Inspector General and its Commissioner Officers were tactful negotiators for the Chinese government and the foreign Allied representatives to minimize mutual financial loss and military and civilian casualties. In the eras of the 1911 Republican Revolution and the subsequent chaotic warfare among the warlords, the Customs Service was the sole instrument to bring in national tax revenue, to regulate domestic economy and to preserve the integrity of the government from rampant internal corruption and political extortion. In the decade of national reconstruction administered by the Nationalist government in the 1930s, the Custom Service was an institutional model for implementation of bureaucratic infrastructure, national economic development, intelligence advancement, technology transfer, resource management and public services.

The Chinese Customs Service was primarily a revenue collection agency. Through its sixty Customs houses and substations, this core function has led it to record the development of China's international trade, with much detail on what types of goods were in demands, and thus to provide insights in shifting patterns of consumption over various time periods and regions. The Customs stations reported quarterly on trade in arms and opium through the Service's active role in the policing of trade and the suppression of proscribed goods. The Customs Service became responsible too for native customs, postal

administration, inland and coastal waterway development, city-port planning, and the representation of China in the international fairs. Its lighthouses and light boats reported on precipitation, temperatures and water levels. The Service regularly compiled reports on local economic conditions, refugee problems, local, provincial and national political affairs, and important events such as the Boxer Rebellion, the 1911 Revolution, and the May Thirtieth workers' strike and massacre of 1925. Its personnel files are extremely rich and could be used in a variety of ways, for instance, for the study of disease patterns.

The Chinese Maritime Customs Service was founded in 1854 when British, French, and American diplomats decided to assist the Qing court in collecting international trade duties in Shanghai, which was one of five treaty ports open to the West since the Sino-British Treaty of Nanjing of 1842. In 1853, in the midst of the Taiping Rebellion (1850-1864), a group of rebels took over the city of Shanghai, destroyed the customhouse and forced the official in charge of customs (called the *taotai*) to flee. Although the customhouse ceased to function, the treaties with Britain, America and France remained in force and required foreign merchants to pay duties to the Chinese government. The British and American consuls required their nationals to declare exports and imports at the consulates and to make commitment to the eventual payment of the required duties. Such expedient measure generated complaints among the British and American merchants since the merchants of other nationalities were free from such legal obligation. After the British regained the control of Shanghai, the British, American and French consuls swayed the *taotai* to return and to reopen the customhouse. In addition, the consuls proposed to help re-establish the customs service with foreign recruits and the *taotai* accepted their proposal on June 29, 1854. The arrangement was that westerners, predominantly British in its initial phase, would staff an Inspectorate, which would be an organ of the Qing bureaucracy and which assessed the duties payable on all imports. One reason why the British, the American, and the French set up the system was to prevent preferential treatment of merchants from

nations without treaties with China, or with better connections than themselves. Following the Second Opium War of 1858-60 between the Qing on the one hand and Britain and France on the other, new treaties put the Customs Service on a new legal basis to extend its operations to new ports such as Nanjing, Niuzhuang, Yantai, Tianjing, Hankou, Zhenjiang, Danshui, Taizhong, Jiujiang and Shantou. Under the stewardship of Sir Robert Hart (1835-1911, an Irish born British diplomat and the Inspector General of Customs from 1863 to 1908), the Maritime Customs Service grew into one of the largest bureaucracies of the Qing Dynasty and its Republican successors. By the last decade of the nineteenth century, the Service supervised around fifty Customs Houses and many more Customs substations across China. Customs revenue amounted to one third of all central revenue from then to the outbreak of the Second World War in China in 1937. Its staff increasingly reached to more than 10,000 members, with Europeans, Americans, and also Japanese after the 1895 Sino-Japanese War, dominating its higher ranks until a policy of sinification was introduced in 1929 that the hire of new foreign staff was eventually stopped in 1930.

As Robert Hart himself once put it, “The Service which I direct is called the Customs Service, but its scope is wide and its aim is to do good work for China in every possible direction.” The Customs Service as the only bureaucracy staffed by foreign personnel did much more than duty-collection on China’s foreign trade. The Service was basically involved in everything relating to matters on transforming China from a celestial empire to a nation. It helped arrange China’s international borrowing, and mapped and policed China’s rivers, harbors and coasts. It assisted China during diplomatic negotiations with other countries, organized its representation at international fairs and exhibitions, and ensured China’s participation in international conventions. It collected all kinds of information, not only relating to trade, marketing and finance, but also to meteorological conditions, diseases, the arms and opium trades, and social, economic and political conditions. Several of its senior personnel became significant scholars in their own right,

wrote important monographs, and shaped Western understandings of China to such an extent that their effects still can be felt.

Coping with the turmoil caused by the Taiping Rebellion (1850-1864) and internal corruption of the Qing Customs officials, the establishment of the Service staffed by multinational personnel not only served the purpose of safeguarding the revenue of the customs tariff and maintained the regional stability, but also provided innovation in governance as China faced different demands created along the turbulent international affairs. The Service of the recruited members was based mainly Chinese who were led by the higher reaches of foreign managerial and technical staff. Efficiency was the priority in the mind of Robert Hart, who was the main figure engineering the Service for five decades. Such fundamental principle exemplified in Hart's effective management of the multinational staff in the Service, especially the Commissioners stationed at local customs. Limiting the budgetary expenditure and circulating frequent correspondence in forms of Circular and Despatch, quarterly reports and annually returns of all sorts of statistics, the Service under Hart's leadership kept the above and the below thoroughly informed, and hence held the Commissioners and every staff accountable.

Along the growth of different demands, the Service offices were constantly adjusting and defining their functions and duties in the trend toward modernization. The Service initially comprised Revenue and Marine departments. Statistical Department was constituted from the former Printing Office and Returns' Department of the Shanghai Customs in 1873 and was charged by Statistical Secretary. The Quarterly and Annual Returns of Trade were sent to the Statistical Secretary for the following seasonal publication, when the same trade reports were to be sent direct to the Inspector General in Peking for review and policy deliberation. Such systematic compilation of statistical data presented China as a modern nation in the international arena, and served as a scientific basis for political decision-making to measure the outcome of the constitutional reform



process since the late Qing era.

The Customs' Educational Department—Tongwen Guan (Translators College) in Peking and in Canton—was established in 1860, and the Colleges were known not only for enhancing their own human resources but also for introducing Western knowledge to the general public. In 1912, the growing importance of Customs buildings and property kindled an institutional imperative for the establishment of Works Department. The Imperial Postal Service was part of the Customs' administrative responsibility before the establishment of its own ministry (Youchuan Bu 郵傳部) in 1906, and the Postal Service was not formally separated from the Maritime Customs until 1911. Other institutional branches included setting up a Meteorological Station and Customs College at Peking. The Customs' Meteorological Station was developed under the direction of Jesuit priests at the celebrated Siccawei Observatory in Shanghai from the 1880s to 1930. The Customs College was established in 1906 at Peking for training Chinese young citizens along the Western lines for the administration of the Chinese Customs Service. When China recovered tariff autonomy from foreign influence in 1929 when the Nationalist government had defeated major warlords and unified China, the introduction of a higher tariff to increase revenue income in turn encouraged smuggling and endangered the revenue. The then Inspector General Frederick Maze (a nephew of Hart, joined the Service in 1891 and served the term of the I.G. between 1929 and 1943) approached Chinese government and recommended that a Preventive Department on modern lines be inaugurated in order to meet changed situation. The government accepted his advice and the establishment of the Preventive department in 1930 marked a further expansion of the Maritime Customs Service. From a socio-cultural perspective, we find that the Customs Service was a very diverse organization. It was neither just Chinese nor foreign, but a hybrid institution.

The Customs history offers a unique case of Chinese semi-coloniality characterized by Dr. Sun Yat-sen as an inferior status than any of colonies that could demand international

protection for its territorial integrity from their imperialist colonizers. Despite such international vulnerability, Chinese governments tactfully exploited the Customs Service for their goal of Chinese modernity. It will therefore allow the generation of new insights in already well-researched topics such as formal and informal empires and imperialist encroachment, but also make possible the examination of new ones, such as contradiction and complementation of different aspects of globalization, the rise and demise of international order, the contending definitions of Empire, institutional innovation, governance technology, the role of science and disease, the history of foreign communities, and the emergence of port cities.

## II. Epidemic and Introducing Quarantine

Foucault argued in *Discipline and Punish* that social condition of epidemic produced earlier examples of disciplinary government, rendering subjects normalized through mechanism of bodily training and self-surveillance.<sup>2</sup> The practice of quarantine was embedded in the interest of rendering governable through public health projects in the modern world as commerce reached abroad and world-wide. Such practice was also bound up with the development of administrative government capturing the imagination of “geo-body”<sup>3</sup> of one’s nation to outwardly classify, communicate and enforce artificial territorial boundaries, and inwardly project a series of expectations of modern citizenship of healthy individuals on its own population. These territorial and human boundaries only came to be meaningful in the arena of commercial regulation and customs and as a site of medico-legal border control and quarantine.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* (Penguin, 1991), p. 198.

<sup>3</sup> The term “geobody” was coined by Thongchai Winichakul in his *Siam Mapped: A History of the Geo-Body of a Nation* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’I Press, 1994).

<sup>4</sup> Bashford’s *Imperial Hygiene*, p. 115.

The term epidemic comes from two Greek words: *demos* meaning ‘people and *epi* meaning ‘upon’ or ‘close to.’ It was used around 500 BC as a title for one of the Hippocratic corpus, and did not imply a modern sense of our current understanding. Since 1603 the use of this English term denotes an unusually high incidence of a disease in time, space and in persons afflicted as compared with previous experience. In a prevalently recognized work, A. S. Benenson has defined “an epidemic” as:

“The occurrence in a community or region of cases of an illness (or an outbreak) clearly in excess of expectancy. The number of cases indicating presence of an epidemic will experience or lack of exposure to the diseases, and time and place of occurrence; epidemicity is thus relative to usual frequency of disease in the same area, among the specified population, at the same season of the year.”<sup>5</sup>

Disease, especially epidemic diseases, plagues human population communitable from one region to another along with the growth of a global economy and the expansion of modernity. Though there have been humanitarian motivations in the interest of understanding diseases and epidemics, the increasing attention and activities of “modern state” on such topics have to do with a new perception of the economic and military value of the population.<sup>6</sup> Such new perception has been informed by the modern state’s political philosophy of mercantilism. According to George Rosen, a pioneering medical hisotrian, mercantilism viewd the monarch’s subjects as his paternalistic property and equated the entire well-being of society to the well-being of the state. It was based on a political bokkeeping that enabled the state to measure its strength in terms of the size of its healthy population and guided its administrative objectives.<sup>7</sup>

Historically, the spread of contagious diseases has been closely related the trade routes across the national borders. A illuminating case in point can be seen in city of Venice, which had monopolized the trade with the countries of the East between the 10th and 16th

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<sup>5</sup> A. S. Benenson, *Control of Communicable Diseases in Man*, 15<sup>th</sup> Edition, (Washington DC: American Public Health Association, 1990), p. 499.

<sup>6</sup> Mark Harrison, *Disease and the Modern World: 1500 to the Present Day*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2004), p. 2.

<sup>7</sup> George Rosen, *The History of Public Health* (New York: MD Publication, 1958, p. 17.

centuries. Venice was practically the primary port which imported goods from India, China and Persia. From 900 to 1500 Venice alone had suffered 63 epidemics of plague.<sup>8</sup> The epidemics instilled fear and simply this fear and the absence of knowledge about the actual causes of their appearance and routes of spread were the major factors compelling many countries to take preventive measures to curb the importation of epidemics.<sup>9</sup> Hence, not surprisingly, the first attempt to enforce maritime quarantine was in 1448 in Venice. Sick people would be given treatment and healthy persons who had arrived from infected localities and countries were put in isolation for up to 40 days or longer.<sup>10</sup> In Austria, the imperial decrees issued as early as 1512 prohibited the admission into the country's territory of gypsies, who were considered as carriers of plague. In France, the first marine quarantine was set up in 1521 at Marseille and in 1622 a law was promulgated prohibiting the admission to Marseille of persons arriving from other localities and countries without a preliminary medical examination. In Frankfurt in 1666, a statute was implemented instructing citizens dwelling in infected houses to refrain from visiting market places and churches.<sup>11</sup>

In England the first quarantine act was not passed until 1710 and subsequently published in 1711, 1712, 1799, 1800 and 1825. The 1712 Quarantine Act stipulated an obligatory 40-day quarantine purification of all ships arriving from that region and the discharge of their cargoes was prohibited. A system of fines was introduced for failure to observe quarantine regulations. In America, the first ordinance was issued in Boston in 1647 to prescribe all ships under threat of US \$100 fine to stop at the entrance to the harbor. In 1701 in Massachusetts all persons ill with the plague, smallpox, fevers and other

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<sup>8</sup> Oleg P. Schepin and Waldemar V. Yermakov, *International Quarantine*, (Madison, Connecticut: International University Press, 1991), p.2. Schepin and Yermakov list a brief history of epidemic such as plague, yellow fever, smallpox.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11. Schepin and Yermakov date this establishment of quarantine system around 1485, however, the archival files from the Chinese Maritime Customs Service Archive date 1448.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 12-15.

contagious diseases were to be isolated in separate houses. In Russia, during the plague of 1664-1665 quarantines were established and any communications with Moscow, and the arrival of people from foreign lands, were prohibited under the threat of the death penalty.<sup>12</sup>

### **III. Nationalizing Quarantine Service by the Ministry of Health**

Quarantine as an imaginary vision of the geo-body of a nation is a perfect site of nationalist expression bound for territorial marking and citizenship making. Quarantine service is essential to the security of trade, and had inaugurated the public hygiene campaigns in modern China. According to the report of Sir Frederick Maze, Commissioner and later Inspector General of China's Maritime Customs, quarantine as a special function of Chinese Maritime Service began from 1873 in Amoy and Shanghai wherein ships and Chinese migrant workers came back and forth from Southeast Asia where cholera rampaged in Thailand and Malaysia. Quarantine was under Customs supervision, and though there were Chinese territorial authorities the foreign consuls had magisterial jurisdiction over the vessels of their corresponding nationalities. The local Taotai appointed the Customs Medical Officer to serve as Port Health Officer, but he would have to inform the Harbor Master (who would in turn inform his superior officer) and obtain the approval of the consul in question. The then Customs Medical Officer in Amoy were Dr. Patrick Manson and his brother David who reported the cholera rampage in 1873:

In consequence of the cholera prevailing in India and the Straits Settlements, a quarantine was established for some time for vessels coming from infected ports. The crews were inspected before entering the inner harbour, but unfortunately in no instance did anything like a history of cholera present itself so as to make isolation necessary.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., pp. 16-19.

<sup>13</sup> Wu Lien-teh, *Plague Fighter: The Autobiography of a Modern Chinese Physician*, (Cambridge: W. Heffer & Sons Ltd., 1959), p. 404.

In 1874, the commissioner of the Amoy Customs George Hughes witnessed the turmoil and deliberated the need of epidemic prevention. He then drafted the quarantine regulations which were supported by the concession of local consulates in three languages (Chinese, English and French) and were subsequently put into practice. According to these regulations, the determination of an infected port rested with the Superintendent of Customs and the foreign consuls. Declaration of Infection was shown by the hoisting of a yellow flag in the foremast of the vessel, which would then proceed up the river to Shanghai. More specifically, the rules provided that:

1. All vessels from Singapore, Bangkok and other cholera-infected places had to anchor at a specified point and to remain there until inspected by the Customs Medical Officers.
2. Such vessels were forbidden to shift their berths, land passengers, baggage or any article whatsoever until a Customs permit to do so had been issued.
3. Punishment for any infraction of these regulations was to be “as the law directs by the Consular officer concerned.”<sup>14</sup>

Shanghai as a city in the turn of the last century was made up of three distinct and independent administrative units, namely: the International Settlement, the French Settlement, and the Chinese City. Each of these units played an equally significant part as far as the health of the port is concerned. The International Settlement had an efficient Public Health Department conducted along the best British lines with a laboratory staff of well-trained men. In the French Settlement there was a Sanitary Service run in accordance with French practices; while in the Chinese city there was hardly any organized attempt at health administration. The port health authority was vested in the Commissioner of Customs who was assisted by a Port Health Officer stationed at Woosung (Wusong). The latter in turn was entirely dependent upon the health organizations of the city for his information as to the prevalence of infectious diseases.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> See Circular 245 for the establishment of quarantine service.

Other customs stations in cities subsequently and respectively established their quarantine service. Ningpo in 1894 declared against Hongkong and Canton regarding the presence of plague; Swatow issued the first sanitary laws in 1883; Newchwang established a sanitary service in 1899; Tientsin obtained the Viceroy's approval for opening a quarantine station at Taku at the same time; Hankow promulgated sanitary regulations in 1902-04. When the Manchurian Plague Prevention Service was established in 1912, it took over all responsibility for the control of epidemic diseases (particularly plague and cholera) in that region. In 1919, the Maritime Customs appropriated \$60,000 for the construction of a quarantine hospital at Newchwang and \$24,000 annually for running expenses. In 1923, the port of Antung received \$45,000 for constructing a modern quarantine station at Santao-Lungkou together with an annual allowance of \$20,000 for upkeep. Both stations were then under the aegis of Manchurian Plague Prevention Service, which also controlled quarantine work.<sup>16</sup> During this period, these port authorities felt themselves constrained to impose quarantine on vessels from particular place even against the wish of the consul, leaving to the latter the responsibility of refusing to assist in enforcing the regulations against vessels of his nationality.

Other than the finance supported by the Maritime Customs Service, local merchants and the Chamber of Commerce made contributions to the cost of maintenance. Such source of finance often raised doubts of the national quarantine lines. For instance, in the dispatch of Shanghai Commissioner, L. Rocher complained that:

“The Sanitary Service is of course a matter which concerns the two foreign Municipal Councils and the Superintendent. I can write in to all and recommend that I be authorized to pay this Laodah a certain sum on retirement, and, in all probability, all will agree. The trouble is that I have not got the money in the Sanitary Account. As you know, we are working on a deficit in this account and we cannot carry on much longer.

The whole system is most unsatisfactory. It is obviously asking the impossible when we expect one Health Officer to attend to the whole needs of the port; but we are certainly in no position to ask those concerned to authorize the engagement of an assistant.

As far as I can see the only satisfactory solution would be to put the Sanitary Service here on the same footing as the Manchurian Plague Prevention Service. The latter gets a fixed annual grant from revenue, is administered by a group of Doctors under Dr. Wu Lien Te, and the

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<sup>16</sup> *Plague Fighter*, p. 406.

Commissioner guards the funds.

I cannot see why the Sanitary Service should receive any contribution from the Settlement or Councils or Municipal Authorities. It is purely a Chinese Government (Matter. check)

The Customs in this Sanitary Service is shouldering all the financial worries, without deriving any benefit. The man in the street looks upon the Sanitary Service as part of our administration; the Harbour Master, who issues Quarantine Notifications with the approval of the Commissioner, is, in doing so, merely carrying out the resolutions of the Superintendent and of the Consular Body.<sup>17</sup>

The Customs' quarantine service did not become a uniform administration until the establishment of Nationalist Government in Nanjing in 1928, and thus the institution of the Ministry of Health. As a result of consultations with T. V. Soong (Minister of Finance), Ruiheng Liu (Minister of Health), F. L. Chang (Director-General of the Customs), Frederick W. Maze (Inspector-General of Customs), the commissioners at various ports, other treaty-port consuls and representatives of shipping companies, it was decided by the National government:

1. To establish the National Quarantine Service with headquarters at Shanghai.
2. To take over at first the station of Shanghai as being the largest and most important, as from July 1930.
3. To promulgate an up-to-date set of Quarantine Regulations for use throughout the ports of China.
4. To make preparations for taking over other ports if, and when, convenient.<sup>18</sup>

In 1930, the Ministry appointed Dr. Wu Lien-Teh to take charge the national quarantine service and henceforth took over the quarantine offices located within the Customs stations in each port. The new service was under the direct control of National Health Administration of the Ministry of Interior. It comprised four Divisions: General Affairs, Epidemic Prevention, Fumigation and Medical Services, each with its own sub-chief, but working under the supervision of the Director. In the process of nationalizing the quarantine service as a pursuit of Chinese modernity, major issues such as central and local controls, international health and national sovereignty, disease control and colonized body, unfolded within the discourse of public health and helped shape the development and transformation of Quarantine service of the Chinese Maritime Customs. Below is the

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<sup>17</sup> Despatch No. 22,659 to Inspector General, Shanghai, May 23rd, 1929.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 407.



section exploring the converging discourse of public health and social control between Chinese hygienists and eugenicists. Quarantine service and social controls proposed by the hygienists and eugenics form two parallels of outward and inward markers for the modern state's exercise of bio-politics.

#### **IV. Public Health and Social Control: Chinese Hygienists Versus Eugenicists**

The picture of public health in China was very disturbing before and after the establishment of Ministry of Health in 1928. Tuberculosis was one of the fatal diseases. According to John B. Grant at the Peking Union Medical College, although there were no statistics from the government, the local records showed that in Beijing in 1927-28, the tuberculosis mortality rate was over 500 per 100,000, probably equivalent to the death rate prevailing a century earlier in Europe.<sup>19</sup> One can only assume that the scenario was much worse in areas outside Beijing, the capital, where a lamentable lack of adequate sanatoria and facilities for proper treatment prevailed. As for lepers, it was estimated by the Chinese Mission to Lepers that there were about one million sufferers, approximately one-half of the world's lepers. Venereal diseases were widespread in China but there were no national statistics on these. However, one can get a glimpse of the tip of iceberg by comparing the extent of venereal disease among Chinese soldiers with those of other nations. For instance, the rate of syphilis was 219.3 per thousand and more than 350 in Suzhou and Beijing, while the British army rate for all venereal diseases was 41.4 and the U. S. army rate was 49.9 per thousand in 1926.<sup>20</sup> No records on mental disorders were produced by the central government and such disorders were not considered by ordinary hospitals as a category for treatment. The extent of mental

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<sup>19</sup> Herbert D. Lamson's *Social Pathology in China: A Source Book for the Study of Problems of Livelihood, Health and the Family* (Shanghai: The Commercial Press, 1935), p. 328.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 355. The rates were not based on studies of the armies as a whole, but upon the numbers coming to hospital due to disease or wounds. Lamson used these figures to show the need for medical prophylactic treatment, greater control of prostitution, and improved discipline in the armies of China.

diseases was estimated as about one in 400, a rate similar to that in Japan.<sup>21</sup>

Facing such pathological phenomena in China, hygienists, sociologists, cultural theorists, educators, and philosophers provided various diagnoses, and remedies different from those of the eugenicists, that I define their multiple approaches as an appropriated Lamarckianism. The following discussion brings out a somewhat synthesis of Lamarckian and Mendelian views of eugenics in China.

As early as the establishment of the National Medical Association (later the Chinese Medical Association) in 1915, eugenic ideas were incorporated into the knowledge of social hygiene promoted by the Association's journal *National Medical Journal of China*. In "Shehui weisheng lun" (Treatise on social hygiene) of 1916, translated from the Japanese journal *Chuo koron* without acknowledging the author and its detailed source, it introduced important aspects of Japanese public hygiene, such as the population survey, the balanced distribution of men and women, labor and leisure, nutrition, home hygiene, public baths, procreation, motherhood, breastfeeding, school hygiene and social welfare. In the section on procreation, it warned against tuberculosis, alcoholism, venereal diseases and mental diseases as dangers to marriage and reproduction, stressing their potential for producing hideous offspring prone to crime. Although such degenerate offspring were not yet found among Japanese nationals, it was easy to observe many unqualified physiques in the conscript examination. As the eugenics bills were implemented in the United States to preclude criminals and the feeble-minded from marriage and from increasing the problems of social hygiene, both Japan and China should closely watch their development. A related social problem involved birth-control methods in China; it was thought that the long-standing practices of abortion and infanticide needed to be curtailed.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 410.

<sup>22</sup> In *Zhonghua yixue zazhi* (*National Medical Journal of China*), vol. 2, no. 2 (1916), pp. 49-58.

In another issue of the same journal, we see in the public discussion column an interesting juxtaposition of two articles by Wu Lien-teh (1879-1960, head of the North Manchurian Plague Prevention Service and later a director of the National Quarantine Service) and Yu Fengbin, two of the founding members of the Journal. Wu's article viewed the future health of the Chinese nation and race with confidence. He stated that if the preventive anti-epidemic plans, mass education in public hygiene and improvement of medical facilities were properly adopted, the health of the nation would gradually recover and the state would become strong and competent. For Wu, plagues, infectious diseases, famine, civil wars, and insanitation were at the core of national and racial weakness. In contrast, Yu's article on the causal relationship between marriage and family hygiene emphasized genetic defectiveness and the danger of reproducing a sickly family, and thereby an impoverished society and long-suffering nation. Yu praised the eugenic elements in the American marriage law and tried to remind his fellow countrymen of the importance of spouse selection. He evoked the ancient exhortation that inbreeding through kin marriage often produces problematical offspring, either physically or mentally handicapped. He also warned against the practice of early marriage in China as violating the eugenic principle. According to his view of Mendelian laws, it was never accidental that people were born of robust or ailing physique; therefore, it was important to investigate the family genealogy before marriage. Moreover, using the principle, attributed to August Weismann, of the distinction of germ cells and body cells, Yu asserted that the parents' talents and behavioral traits would not pass down through generations; therefore, the effects of deformed feet from foot-binding or muscle tone-up would not persist in the next generation. However, diseases like syphilis, tuberculosis, alcoholism and narcotics abuse were thought to poison the body cells and subsequently damage the germ cells of the developing fetus. Yu implored people who cared about their family's prosperity and

health to eradicate evil and unhygienic habits and select their spouse with the utmost care.<sup>23</sup>

Such incorporation of eugenics into marriage and public hygiene was also advocated by Hu Xuanming (1887-?, M.D., Johns Hopkins University), another founding member of the journal who was in charge of the municipal health department in Canton during the 1920s, where his work on public health provided a model for other cities after 1927.<sup>24</sup> His half-translation, half-summary article “Hunyin zhesixue” (婚姻哲嗣學, Eugenics in Marriage, no indication of original authorship),<sup>25</sup> published over seven issues in 1919-21, was sponsored by the Joint Council on Public Health Education, formed by the National Medical Association and the China Medical Missionary Association in cooperation with the Young Men’s Christian Association (Y.M.C.A.) in 1916, in which Hu served as secretary in 1920-21. The Joint Council invited Hu to suggest various sources and translate them swiftly into Chinese in order to spread knowledge of how to survive in the era of natural selection: eugenic bills had already been implemented in some American states yet few Chinese had heard about this development. The Joint Council urged readers to envision their individual marriage choice as a national problem of population, since the majority of the 400 million Chinese were weak and feeble and would be eliminated through world competition if eugenic marriage guidelines were not promulgated.

Although this article was a translation, Hu sometimes inserted his own opinion. He first stated the significance and the scope of eugenics, which goes beyond the

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<sup>23</sup> Both Wu’s “Duiyu zhongyang yiyuan zhi ganyan” (Comments on the establishment of the Central Hospital in Beijing) and Yu’s “Hunyin yu jiating zhi guanxi” (On the relationship of marriage and family hygiene) are juxtaposed in the *National Medical Journal of China*, see vol. 3, no. 4 (1917), pp. 1-6.

<sup>24</sup> Ka-che Yip, *Health and National Reconstruction in Nationalist China: The Development of Modern Health Services, 1928-1937* (Ann Arbor: AAS monograph and occasional paper series, no. 50), p. 47.

<sup>25</sup> Even though Hu did not indicate the source of the original work, from the footnote in Pan Guangdan’s article “Yousheng gailun,” we know that Hu was translating Charles B. Davenport’s *Heredity in Relation to Eugenics* (1911). See Pan’s *Collected Works*, vol. 1, p. 263.

conventional understanding of prenatal care (胎教, *taijiao*). Instead of emphasizing pregnant women's living conditions and behaviors, eugenics underscores the appropriate marriage match in order to reproduce better offspring. Hu considered venereal diseases the most detrimental to progeny and recommended that every young woman should demand that her future fiancé obtain a health certificate from the VD clinic before his marriage proposal. For Hu, eugenics was the most simple and effective formula to save the society and nation from financial burden and racial degeneration. He maintained that eugenic considerations in marriage should be a widespread, common sense practice and that the state should preclude undesirable elements from marriage. Hu also provided a section on basic genetic principles for mating, and it is interesting to note that since the genetic principles were excerpted from the American experience, Hu did not follow the English original and come up with a specific hierarchical standard of hair, eye color, skin, height, weight, talents, and physical strength for Chinese in their marriage selection. Hu subsequently enumerated a series of genetic diseases to serve as background knowledge for genealogical observation and marriage decision-making.<sup>26</sup>

The pattern of eugenic ideas favored by the hygienists was also followed by Hu Ding'an (M.D., Ph.D., University of Berlin, 1926), who from 1929-37 advocated state reform of Chinese medicine and scientific transformation of traditional medicinal herbs into pharmaceutical drugs, and the elimination of traditional medicinal practice from the national education system.<sup>27</sup> In his medical commentaries, Hu diagnosed the reasons for Chinese weakness. Historically and culturally, the Chinese people overemphasized mental activities and ignored military spirit and physical exercises. This historical

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<sup>26</sup> Hu Xuanming, "Hunyin zhesixue" in *Zhonghua yixue zazhi (National Medical Journal of China)*, vol. 5, nos. 3 and 4 (1919), pp. 144-148, and pp. 216-224; vol. 6, nos. 1, 2, 3, 4 (1920), pp. 50-57, pp. 121-132, pp. 174-187, pp. 256-268; vol. 7, no. 1 (1921), pp. 60-71.

<sup>27</sup> Hu Ding'an's own memoir article "Guchui yixue geming de huiyi" (Memoir on the campaign for the medical revolution) in *Zhuanji wenxue*, vol. 13, no. 5 (1968), p. 38.

tendency was further worsened by the depraved customs of foot-binding and opium addiction, ignorance of medical knowledge, and the absence of national identity and a national health policy administered by the state. Subsequently, Hu proposed a health-strengthening plan with a step-by-step formula. First, revitalize national military training by pursuing national sports activities, to reinvigorate the citizens' physical strength and the soldiers' martial spirit. Second, improve racial stock through better breeding, which would take into account both mental and physical aspects, in order to increase the average standard of intelligence, character and morality. According to Hu, eugenics involves childbirth improvement, marriage counseling, and prevention of venereal diseases, tuberculosis, mental diseases and narcotics abuse. Third, concentrate manpower and intelligence on social sciences in order to produce various statistical data and enhance creativity. Fourth, replenish the depleted national strength, which had suffered from incessant epidemics, famines and wars. A national health plan should be implemented together with sports education from the primary level of the school system in order to safeguard the foundation of a healthy nation. Fifth, aim high to become one of the great powers like the Euro-American countries. To achieve such a goal, the first four steps should be followed closely.<sup>28</sup>

From the above-mentioned views of the hygienists, we do not see any particular confrontation between hygienists and eugenicists; some eugenic ideas were already incorporated into a holistic plan of social hygiene. However, this social unity of hygienic and eugenic ideas was formed on the basis of the pragmatic concern to create a comprehensive plan of control and prevention for venereal diseases, tuberculosis and mental diseases, which were easily visible and spread rapidly in the crowded, urbanized

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<sup>28</sup> Hu Dingan, "Minzu de liliang zai guomin jiankang" (The strength of a nation relies upon the health of the people) in his collection of medical commentaries *Hu Dingan yishi yanlunji* (Shanghai: Shangwu, 1935), pp. 63-70. Chinese pursuit of national sports has been recently examined by Andrew Morris in his book titled *Marrow of the Nation: A History of Sport and Physical Culture in Republican China*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004).

and industrialized cities. This inclusive approach to social hygiene was also seen in the history of health campaigns of the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA, established in 1895) in China. From 1912, the Association formally organized a lecture bureau to satisfy the critical need for education and to run a campaign propagating public health knowledge. In order to convey effectively the importance of national health, the bureau employed visual aids such as cartoons, popular literature, slides, films and exhibits to attract a large general audience, and mobilized student volunteers, local doctors and the local elite to form an efficient community network in each city.<sup>29</sup> In addition to the social service and educational projects, the Association's student department attracted a new generation of educated urban youths who were earnestly searching for ways to strengthen China, and also formed student athletic teams.<sup>30</sup> Interestingly, when Pan Guangdan set up the *Eugenics monthly* (*Yousheng yuekan*), published from June, 1931, to March, 1932, and the aforementioned eugenics journal *Huanian*, published from April 1932 to 1937, both journals were sponsored by the YMCA in Shanghai.<sup>31</sup>

Nonetheless, this inclusive hygienic campaign by no means conformed to the Mendelian standpoint of the eugenicists, that is, a radical and comprehensive plan of environmental improvement can never assure the betterment of race and nation. For the eugenicists, the euthenic approach of medicine, social hygiene, philanthropy, education and economic reform can merely provide temporary cosmetic change.<sup>32</sup> The

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<sup>29</sup> See Shirley S. Garrett, *Social Reformers in Urban China: The Chinese Y.M.C.A., 1895-1926* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970), pp. 140-148.

<sup>30</sup> Kimberly A. Risedorph, "Reformers, Athletes, and Students: the YMCA in China, 1895-1935," (Dissertation, Washington University, 1994).

<sup>31</sup> Pan's propagation of eugenics ideas and his affiliation with the YMCA have not appeared in any studies on the YMCA so far. When I interviewed Pan's daughter, Pan Naimu, she said Pan was a Christian initially but later rejected Christianity. It seems that Pan Naimu does not want to pursue this topic and I speculate this has something to do with Pan being accused of being a counterrevolutionary and rightist, and being tortured to death during the Cultural Revolution.

<sup>32</sup> On this fundamental issue Pan Guangdan stood on the side of the geneticists; Pan also had a follower, Xu Zhenhua, who wrote a long article, "Youshengxue yu zhongguo" (Eugenics and China) in *Tung-chi Acta Medica* (Tongji yixue quarterly), vol. 1 (1931), nos. 1 and 2, pp. 16-93.

eugenicists' fundamental position was different from that of the hygienists, cultural theorists, socialists and educators, and provoked a series of debates, which shaped the multilateral meaning of eugenics. From which, we gain a better grasp of the difference between the biological restraint and social control approaches and their nuances in the Chinese context.

After scholars proposed different measures such as dietary improvement, physical education, geographical and meteorological analysis, bodily hygiene and public hygiene, and economic reform; these were collected in a book entitled *Kexue de minzu fuxing* (科學的民族復興, Scientific national revival), published by the Science Society of China in 1937.<sup>33</sup> Among these proposals, the most important were the New Life Movement initiated by Chiang Kai-shek and the subsequent campaigns of Cultural Construction (文化建設, *wenhua jianshe*) directed by Chen Lifu from 1934.

The New Life movement consisted of various propaganda and legislation aimed at elimination of narcotics, body and environmental hygiene, women's education for the war economy and foreign import reduction, which would purge the unhealthy habits of body and mind among the Chinese people.<sup>34</sup> The focus of the New Life Movement on moral and physical cleanliness linked four Confucian virtues, *li* (propriety), *yi* (justice), *lian* (integrity) and *chi* (shame conscientiousness), with the physical reforms concerning gymnastic exercises, and the problems of spitting, smoking, prostitution, drinking, opium addiction, and women's indecent exposure through revealing clothing, which defined a bodily discipline and generated a mental awareness of a national subject. The definition and embodiment of a national subject as a whole would serve to draw lines between desirable members and undesirable elements. Alongside the formation of

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<sup>33</sup> In addition, there was Zhang Junjun's *Minzu suzhi zhi gaizao*, focused on Chinese dietary improvement and physical education, (Chongqing: the Commercial Press, 1944).

<sup>34</sup> Arif Dirlik, "The Ideological Foundations of the New Life Movement: A Study in Counterrevolution" in *Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 34 (1975), no. 4, pp. 945-980.



a national subject and a focal point for national identity, the State was able to exercise power upon each individual body.

However, each individual body would perish after one lifetime and the results of its moral and bodily disciplines would vanish as well. Hence, Chen Lifu's Cultural Construction campaigns were aimed at the perpetuation of a cultural body from which each desirable individual body could be reproduced accordingly. In his discussion on Cultural Construction, Chen commented that the New Life movement focused on the present, whereas Cultural Construction would look forward to the future. He underlined as its first priority the attainment of self-understanding of the Chinese cultural essence as spiritual, as opposed to Western materiality, from which perspective one could recognize its glorious past and establish national confidence. Chen described the second step as synthesizing Western science and material creativity as a new element to complement the old spiritual legacy.<sup>35</sup> These two recipes became the guidelines for the discursive practices based on cultural revival in the journal *Wenhua jianshe* (Cultural Construction), which carried a series of national histories dealing with various aspects of culture, supposedly "reconstructed" with scientific methods and solid scholarship.

The convergence of the eugenicists and hygienists by no means implies that the two groups can be lumped together in the Chinese context. For the hygienists, the most radical and effective medical treatment for any disease or epidemic was to eradicate the roots, namely, the communicable and transmittable microbes. For the eugenicists, this aggressive medical intervention merely represented a passive or negative agenda within the eugenics movement. This point of convergence is thus precisely the point of divergence between the eugenicists and hygienists.

## **V. Some Preliminary Concluding Notes**

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<sup>35</sup> Chen Lifu, "Zhongguo wenhua jianshe lun" in *Wenhua jianshe*, vol. 1 (1934), no. 1, pp. 11-16.

1. Chinese quarantine service and its history together with the introduction of eugenics into China are driven by the forces of national survival and national sentiments for *Fuguo Qiangbing* (富國強兵 *Strengthening and enriching the Nation*).
2. Quarantine service, public health and eugenics are ways in which the national goals of epidemics-diseases prevention and health can be approached as the symbols of modernity and as self-identification for a nation among the series of others.
3. Quarantine service along the national borders imposes exclusion and penalty in order to keep the undesired people and communicable microbes out of national terrains, and juxtaposes an inward parallel of selecting desirable social elements and disciplining national citizens. The comprehensive set of these approaches can be understood as the bio-technology of modern governance.