

研究ノート

A Comparison of Tagore's *Nationalism* and Sun Yat-sen's *The Three Principles of the People* from the Perspective of Nationalism

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1. Introduction

Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1841), a major Indian literary and intellectual figure, was the first Asian writer to become a Nobel laureate,¹ and is highly regarded as the spiritual guide of India's national liberation movement. Sun Yat-sen (1866-1925) is the founding father of the Republic of China and of the Chinese Nationalist Party (or Kuomintang). Even after the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949, Sun continues to be lauded as 'the forerunner of the Chinese revolution'.² These two Eastern countries' similar situation of being oppressed by Western imperialism incited both Tagore and Sun to enquire into the essence of Western nation states and the mechanisms of their imperialist expansion, in order to find a solution for their own countries' problems. Tagore's *Nationalism*³ and Sun's *The Three Principles of the People*⁴ (三民主義) are two important works that resulted from enquiry into the West by early modern Eastern scholars.

Tagore's *Nationalism* is based on lectures delivered during his visit to Japan and the US in 1916-1917. The text consists of three parts: "nationalism in Japan", "nationalism in the West", and "nationalism in India". Sun's *The Three Principles of the People* is also based on a series of lectures, but to revolutionary soldiers and students in Canton in 1924.⁵ Sun's work is also divided into three parts: "the principle of nationalism" (民族主義), "the principle of the people's sovereignty" (民權主義), and "the principle of the people's livelihood" (民生主義). Though Sun's first principle is translated as 'nationalism', actually, the English word nationalism has a much wider meaning than the Chinese word 民族主義, and nationalism in its broader sense is present through out the whole of *The Three Principles of the People*.

Notwithstanding various differences in style and methodology of these two works, we can recognize essentially three common aspects in their thinking: their understanding of and attitudes towards Western nation state; the relationship between the West and the East; the problem of the East and, in particular, that of their own countries. It is in relation to these perspectives, that this paper will explore the similarities and differences between Tagore and Sun's conceptions of nationalism, in a broad sense of the word. We will start with what is similar between their approaches before turning to the differences that separate them.

2. Similarities

2.1 The characterization of the Western nation state as a machine

Both Tagore and Sun regard the modern Western nation state as a 'machine,' of which individuals constitute the parts, and whose efficiency and strength explain in turn the strength of the nation.

Nation is the core concept in Tagore's *Nationalism*, and he gives a clear definition of it. 'A nation, in the

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sense of the political and economic union of a people, is that aspect which a whole population assumes when organized for a mechanical purpose.⁶ Or again, 'What is the Nation? It is the aspect of a whole people as an organized power.'⁷ Tagore emphasizes that the Nation is a mechanical organization of the whole population. The purpose of this mechanical organization is to become strong and efficient, and hence powerful. With the help of science, this political organization has gained its perfection and became the ruling force of society. Individuals become parts of the machine, organizing themselves to gain wealth and power; they transfer their responsibility to this machine, and feel a moral satisfaction at having done their job for the Nation.

Sun for his part does not resort to a unique term to describe Western nation states. He employs, instead, commonly used terms like 'Great Powers', 'powers', etc. In his sixth lecture on the principle of people's sovereignty, Sun also describes the Western state as machine.

'Western statesmen and students of jurisprudence now speak of government as machinery and of law as an instrument. A great many Chinese books on government and law are translations from the Japanese. The Japanese have given government organization the designation of Chi-kuan (organ, or bureau). Chi-kuan means the same thing as the common word "machinery" in China; ... But what is the difference between political machinery and manufacturing machinery? Manufacturing machinery is made entirely of material things... political machinery is constructed of human beings ...'⁸

One of Sun's fundamental arguments is that a nation can only become wealthy and powerful when the state's machinery becomes complete, strong, and all powerful.

2.2 The injustice of the West's oppression of the East

As far as the relation between the East and the West is concerned, both Tagore and Sun point out the fact that the East has been oppressed by the West, and strongly criticize the injustice of the Western Powers' imperial invasion and domination of the East.

According to Tagore, the international system contains two types of relationships, those among fellow Nations in the West, and those between Western Nations and Eastern No-nations. Tagore argues that Western civilization has characteristics of exclusiveness and aggressiveness. Nations permanently try to keep each other in check through armament and diplomacy. 'Each nation has its own history of thieving and lies and broken faith, therefore there can only flourish international suspicion and jealousy, and international moral shame becomes anaemic to a degree of ludicrousness.'⁹ Nations also fight among themselves for the control of No-nations. Using the example of his home country India, Tagore strongly criticizes the Nation's colonial rule of No-nation.

'While the small feeding-bottle of our education is nearly dry, and sanitation sucks its own thumb in despair, the military organization, the magisterial offices, the police, the Criminal Investigation Department, the secret spy system, attain to an abnormal girth in their waists, occupying every inch of our country. ... the Nation of the West forges its iron chains of organization which are the most relentless and unbreakable that have ever been manufactured in the whole history of man.'¹⁰

Concerning colonial oppression of India's economy, Tagore writes:

'The nations have decreed that we must remain purely an agricultural people, even forgetting the use of arms for all time to come. Thus India is being turned into so many predigested morsels of food ready to be swallowed at any moment by any nation which has even the most rudimentary set of teeth in its head.'¹¹

Sun also, talks of the Western political and economic oppression to which China has been subjected.

Politically, China has lost much of its territory to the imperial invasion by the Great Powers. According to him, the military force of any one major Power is sufficient to destroy China rapidly and the only reason China still exists as a country is because there is a balance of power among the Great Powers present in China. Economically, China suffered great losses due to, 1) the invasion of foreign goods; 2) the domination of foreign banks, 3) foreign freight charges, 4) taxes, rents, and land sales on settlements and ceded areas, 5) special privileges of foreign private business, and 6) foreign speculation. This economic domination was backed up by political imperialism when necessary. As a result, he writes, 'the living problems of Chinese people are daily more pressing, the unemployed are daily increasing, and the country's power is, in consequence, steadily weakening.'¹²

In late 1924 he gave a speech entitled 'Great Asianism' (大アジア主義) in Kobe, Japn, in which he strongly criticizes Western culture as *pa-tao* (霸道) or the way of might. 'Europeans are oppressing our Asians through force of arms. And because of that, our Asia can not progress!'¹³ 'The minority of four hundreds million (Europeans) are oppressing the majority of nine hundreds million (Asians), which is against the great way of justice!'¹⁴

2.3 The morality of Eastern culture

They also both emphasize the moral value of Eastern civilization, in opposition to the utilitarian and aggressive aspects of Western civilization. According to Tagore, Asia developed its own civilization which is based on the moral and spiritual ideals of man. 'We have our aspiration for a reality... that goes beyond death, giving it a meaning, that rises above all evils of life, bringing its peace and purity, its cheerful renunciation of self.'¹⁵ According to him, the history of India is that of constant adjustments and efforts to attain the spiritual unity of all races there. Concerning the international relationships that existed in the Eastern civilization, Tagore says, 'I cannot but bring to your mind those days when the whole of Eastern Asia from Burma to Japan was united with India in the closest tie of friendship, the only natural tie which can exist between nations. There was a living communication of hearts...'¹⁶ Tagore emphasizes that, 'the civilization, whose basis is society and the spiritual ideal of man, is still a living thing in China and in India.'¹⁷

Sun also argues that European civilization is only superior in scientific and material advances, not in morality and political philosophy. Ancient China had already attained a high standard of morality, which included loyalty, filial devotion, kindness, love, faithfulness, justice, love of harmony and peace, etc. China had also invented a discriminating and comprehensive political philosophy, which calls upon a man to culture and develop "from within outward".¹⁸ And Sun emphasizes that the morality of peace loving is a natural disposition in China's relations with foreign nations. In his lecture 'Great Asianism,' Sun claims that Asian culture is that of the royal way (王道), which does not oppress other nations but influences others by the morality of benevolence and justice (仁義道德).

3. Differences

Notwithstanding these similarities, there are clear and deep differences between the works of Tagore and Sun. The most important one is that Tagore strongly criticizes nationalism, while Sun speaks highly of it. There are major differences in regard to their attitude towards the nation state, their understanding of the nature of Western imperial oppression, as well as their views on the specific problems of their respective countries.

3.1 The attitude towards the mechanical character of the Western nation state

Even though both Sun and Tagore see the Western nation state as a machine, they have opposite attitudes

towards it. Sun highly praises the efficiency and strength of the state machinery in the West. When discussing the establishment of the United States and the role of Bismarck in the formation of modern Germany, he argues that the US and Germany became the wealthiest and most powerful countries in the world, because they succeeded in setting up strong central governments and uniting formerly separate regions into a single nation. Sun believes that the welfare of the people depends mostly on the strength and efficiency of the state machinery. Though he mentions the concern that this machine might grow too powerful to be controlled by the people, he assumes that this problem can be solved by a better system of democracy. He believes that through his own theory of democracy, 'we will be able to realize the ideal of an American scholar — an all-powerful government seeking the welfare of the people.'¹⁹

Sun thinks highly not only of Western state machinery but also nationalism. Nationalism, he says, 'is that precious possession by which humanity maintains its existence.'²⁰ According to Sun, the strength and power of those great powers were built on their spirit of nationalism.

While being wealthy and powerful is the aspect of the Western nation which Sun praises, the inhumanity of the Nation is the object of Tagore's criticism. Though both Sun and Tagore see the fundamental role of science in state machinery, they have very different understandings of that role. Sun speaks highly of the progress of science in the West. He believes that scientific methods can further perfect the state machinery and allow us to solve the problem of an uncontrollably powerful state. To the contrary, Tagore argues that scientific organizations can only strengthen our power, but can not increase our humanity. Science can find the laws of things and put them to use, but science itself is not man's nature. 'We all know that intellect is impersonal. Our life and our heart are one with us, but our mind can be detached from the personal man and then only can it freely move in its world of thoughts.'²¹

For Tagore, the purpose of the Nation, the mechanical organization created by science, is to become strong and sufficient, to pursue wealth and power. This is not too much different from Sun's understanding of the function of the modern nation state. The difference lies in that Sun evaluates that goal positively, while Tagore rejects it. Tagore argues that when political and economic organization becomes all-powerful, the personal and moral men are giving way to the political and economic man and reduced to 'war-making and money-making puppets.' 'Everything becomes a revolution of policy carried out by the human parts of the machines, with no twinge of pity or moral responsibility.'²² According to Tagore, in the absence of human ideals, power becomes something too abstract; the living bonds of society are breaking up; the relationships of men become utilitarian. As a result, conflicts arise between man and woman, capital and labor, individual and state, etc. Tagore says, 'in that state of intoxication we live in a world of abnormality where our strength is not health and our liberty is not freedom. Therefore political freedom does not give us freedom when our mind is not free.'²³

Japan, an Eastern country which had followed the way of the West with success, was a special concern for both Sun and Tagore. Sun lauded Japan as an excellent model for China. He says that Japan successfully united the interest of feudal lords to form a Yamato race, and with the spirit of Yamato race, Japan have successfully learned the scientific methods of state-building from the West and became as strong as other Great Powers. 'The genius of the Yamato race has shown no decay; riding upon the advance of European civilization, and acclimatizing themselves to the culture of the West, they have employed the new methods of science to further their state, and have become so modernized in half a century that they are now the strongest nation in the East, on a par with the nations of Europe and America.'²⁴

Tagore also praises Japan for being the first Eastern country to break through the confinement of old habits, thus giving hope to the rest of Asia. But Contrary to Sun, Tagore exhorts Japan to remain truthful to her ideals of humanity and not to accept Western civilization with all its tendencies, methods, and structures. 'Japan cannot altogether lose and merge herself in the scientific paraphernalia she has acquired from the West

NIU A Comparison of Tagore's *Nationalism* and Sun Yat-sen's *The Three Principles of the People* from the Perspective of Nationalism and be turned into a mere borrowed machine.²⁵

3.2 Understandings of the nature of the West's oppression of the East

3.2.1 Sun

Sun uses the term imperialism to describe the Great Powers' oppression of weak and small nations. He defines it as 'the policy of aggression upon other countries by means of political force.'²⁶ Sun argues that the Great War (the First World War) was caused by the imperialistic rivalry of Great Powers, and 'the effect of the war was merely the overthrow of one imperialism by another imperialism, what survived was still imperialism.'²⁷

Sun also interprets the Western's powers' oppression of the weak nations of the East as the aggression of white races on other races. Sun emphasizes time and again that under the Great Powers' oppression, the main danger facing China is 'the loss of our country and the annihilation of our race'. China, he says, has been in history twice subjected by smaller peoples, the Mongolian and Manchu respectively, but both were ultimately absorbed by the Chinese majority. However, the situation this time is much different. In the past one hundred years, the population of the Great Powers has increased several folds, argues Sun, while that of China has not increased at all. Sun warns that if this tendency continues, the Chinese people will become a minority and might be absorbed or destroyed by other races.

China must find a solution to this pressing problem and, according to Sun, that solution is nationalism. As mentioned earlier, he believes that it is nationalism that allowed Western countries to build united states and to become strong and wealthy. To the opposite, because China has lost its nationalism, the Chinese people remain 'a sheet of loose sand.' Hence in order to survive and to become strong and wealthy, China must follow the model of the West, it must revive its lost nationalism and build a united nation.

For Sun, nationalism is a precious possession, but imperialism is evil. It seems that once a nation has built a strong state machinery and become powerful by following the Western model, it can then, as far as its relationships to other nations are concerned, choose between imperialism and peace, between might or right. Furthermore, only those who have succeeded developing into a strong state can have this choice. This is clear in his attitude towards Japan. On the one hand, Sun applauds Japan's learning from the West and becoming strong. He offers it as a model for other Asian nations to imitate. On the other hand, he urges Japan not to follow the imperial route of the West, which leads to the oppression of other nations. At the end of his 'Great Asianism' lecture in Kobe, Sun says, 'the Japanese people has already attained the culture of the way of might from Europe and America, it is still maintaining the Asian culture of the royal way. As for the coming future of the world culture, whether Japan will ultimately become the warrior of the Western way of might, or the defender of the Eastern royal way, depends on you Japanese people to consider and chose.'²⁸

Sun highly praises socialist Russia's fight against imperialism and capitalism for the cause of justice and equality. He predicts that there will be another world war, which will be a war between might and right, between the oppressors and the oppressed.

3.2.2 Tagore

Unlike Sun, Tagore has not even mentioned the concept of imperialism. For him, nationalism is the culprit of conflicts among Nations, as well as of the Western Nations' oppression of Eastern No-nations.

Different from Sun, who emphasizes the positive role of nationalism in state building, Tagore sees the manifestation of it more in the Nation's dealing with alien peoples. Tagore argues that the spirit of conflict and conquest is at the core of nationalism. Nationalism is sowing all over the world the seeds of fear, greed, suspicion, and moral shame. He describes the situation in the following way:

nations fearing each other like the prowling wild beasts of night-time; shutting their doors of hospitality; combining only for purpose of aggression or defense; hiding in their holes their trade secrets, state secrets, secrets of their armaments; making peace-offerings to each other's barking dogs with the meat which does not belong to them; holding down fallen races which struggle to stand upon their feet; with their right hands dispensing religion to weaker peoples, while robbing them with their left.²⁹

Tagore describes the idea of the Nation as 'one of the most powerful anesthetics that man has invented.'³⁰ Nationalism under the name of patriotism is poisoning the foundation of humanity and cultivating moral blindness. 'Where the spirit of western nationalism prevails, the whole people is being taught from boyhood to foster hatreds and ambitions by all kinds of means... It is holding up gigantic selfishness as the one universal religion for all nations of the world.'³¹ Filled with the arrogance of their own superiority and contempt for others, peoples blindly go on harming other peoples without feeling any uneasiness bothering their conscience.

While Sun worries that Chinese race might be annihilated, Tagore does not seem to have the least concern that the British Nation might destroy or absorb the races of India.³² Since the Nation has to feed on the resources of the No-nation, its interest is not in destroying the No-nation, but in keeping it alive and weak forever. What Tagore strongly criticizes is the inhumanity of the Nation's rule over the No-nation. According to him, this inhumanity results from the nature of the Nation which is the organized self-interest of a whole people. 'The government by the Nation is neither British nor anything else; it is an applied science and therefore more or less similar in its principles wherever it is used.'³³ With the scientific perfection and bloodlessness of the government by the Nation, each individual of the ruled country is in the relentless grip of the Nation, and their power is atrophied at the root. 'What comes to us in the shape of a mere bloodless policy may pierce into the very core of our life, may threaten the whole future of our people with a perpetual helplessness of emasculation...'³⁴

Thus for Tagore the origin of all evil is Nation and nationalism. In order to solve the problem of Nation's government of No-nation, Nation as such must be denied. Tagore is against nationalism not only in Nations, but also in No-nations seeking to escape the rule of Nation, including his home country India. 'The newly converted fanatic of nationalism answers that 'so long as nations are rampant in this world we have not the option freely to develop our higher humanity. We must utilize every faculty that we possess to resist the evil by assuming it our selves in the fullest degree.'³⁵ This Tagore regards as the imitation of the worst aspect of the West.

Again, distinct from Sun who praises Japan's nationalism while rejects its turning to imperialism, Tagore rather urges Japan not to accept as its religion the organized selfishness of nationalism. For Tagore, nationalism will not only destroy the moral and spiritual ideals of its own people, but also will definitely lead to invading other nations. Tagore also realized that this was exactly what was happening in Japan. 'I have seen in Japan the voluntary submission of the whole people to the trimming of their minds and clipping of their freedom by their government... The people accept this all-pervading mental slavery with cheerfulness and pride because of their nervous desire to turn themselves into a machine of power, called the Nation, and emulate other machines in their collective worldliness.'³⁶

Thus while Sun believed that the problem could be solved through weaker countries' turning themselves into nation states and then fighting against the evil nations in the West, Tagore completely denies this justification of Nation and nationalism. He says, 'the western nations are following that path of suicide, where they are smothering their humanity under their immense weight of organization in order to keep themselves in power and hold others in subjection.'³⁷ Tagore prophesies that this situation cannot go on forever. 'The lumbering structure of modern progress, riveted by the iron bolts of efficiency, which runs upon the wheels of

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ambition, cannot hold together for long. Collisions are certain to occur.³⁸ He sees the European War as the beginning of further collisions.

3.3 Their social ideals and the understanding of their own countries' problems

The difference between the attitudes of Sun and Tagore on nationalism is closely related to their different social ideals and their understanding of their own countries' problems.

3.3.1 Tagore

The social ideal of Tagore is not a political civilization, like that of the West, but social civilization, which he believes exists in the No-nations of the East. According to Tagore, social civilization is based not on science, but on the moral and spiritual ideals of man; its ultimate purpose is not the limitless accumulation of wealth and power, but the harmonious growth and completion of humanity. In social civilization, men come into close contact with one another through their higher nature of sympathy, and develop their social ideal in their relationships of mutual help and cooperation. For the harmonious development of man, the social ideals regulate man's lower passions on the one hand, and cultivate disinterested human love on the other. Tagore argues that the spirit of cooperation is the source of true greatness.

The real problem of this civilization, according to Tagore, lies in outdated social habits and ideals, which have their origin in the inertia of human mind. 'The tendency of mind is economical; it loves to form habits and move in grooves which save it the trouble of thinking anew at each of its steps. Ideals once formed make the mind lazy. It becomes afraid to risk its acquisitions in fresh endeavors.'³⁹ To solve the problem, men must have the courage to break through the confinements of outdated social habits, and to evolve their social ideals together with the growing and changing of life.

According to Tagore, the problem which India has been constantly facing is the race problem. Tagore argues that India is 'many countries packed in one geographical receptacle.'⁴⁰ India has accepted, he says, with the spirit of toleration this racial diversity from the beginning of its history and had tried experiments to evolve a social unity. 'She has tries to make an adjustment of races, to acknowledge the real differences between them where these exist, and yet seek for some basis of unity. This basis has come through our saints...preaching one God to all races of India.'⁴¹ Tagore emphasizes that India was a no-nation. India's history is the history of its social life and attainment of spiritual ideals, not that of the rise and fall of kingdoms. What truly belonged to the people there were their homes, fields, temples, schools, and their village governments; thrones of the kings were not their real concern.

Tagore also agrees that India has not achieved a full measure of success in dealing with this problem. The caste system recognized differences but failed to realize the law of change; it gave the negative benefit of peace, but not the positive possibility of expansion and movement. With time, the caste system had stiffened; life had departed from it. The rigid boundary of class classification and tyrannical social restrictions were not only imposing 'the galling yoke of inferiority' upon those of lower castes, but also paralyzing the 'living nature' of those educated, making them insensible of the real needs of the society.

Tagore argues that its own social weakness explains why India could not cope with the invasion of Western Nations. He criticizes Indian nationalists as socially conservative and politically radical. They have no sympathy with the special problem of India, believing its social system is perfect and all miseries were caused by outsiders. They are, he says, trying to 'build a political miracle of freedom upon the quicksand of social slavery.'⁴² The weakness of a social system will become a source of danger in politics. 'The same inertia which leads to our idolatry of dead forms in social institutions will create in our politics prison-house with immovable walls.'⁴³

Tagore argues that historically India remained aloof from politics, which was 'a mere drift over her surface of life.'⁴⁴ 'The solutions of the life problems of peoples were thought out in seclusion and carried out behind the security of aloofness, where all the dynastic changes and foreign invasions hardly touched them.'⁴⁵ According to Tagore, this seclusion was lost forever when India was overtaken by the Nation. Thus, in order to solve India's own problem, the world's problem must also be taken into account. 'Now the time has come when we must make the world problem our own problem; we must bring the spirit of civilization into harmony with the history of all nations of the earth.'⁴⁶

In order to do that, India must remove its outdated social customs and ideals. It must also learn from the West its rule of law and its ideal of ethical freedom.

'Europe has been teaching us the higher obligations of public good above those of the family and the clan, the sacredness of law, which makes society independent of individual caprice, secures for it continuity of progress, and guarantees justice to all men of all positions in life. Above all things Europe has held high before our minds the banner of liberty...'⁴⁷

Tagore argues that if India could assimilate what is universal and permanent in the West, it might bring about the real reconciliation between the East and the West.

Tagore argues that India's problem is that of the world in miniature. If India could solve her own race problem, she might contribute to solving the world problem. 'What India has been, the whole world is now. The whole world is becoming one country through scientific facility. And the moment is arriving when you must also find a basis of unity which is not political.'⁴⁸ What Tagore advocates for the world is not a relation among those 'gigantic organizations' but the spiritual unity of all human being.

'Therefore man will have to exert all his power of love and clarity of vision to make another great moral adjustment which will comprehend the whole world of men and not merely the fractional groups of nationality. The call has come to every individual in the present age to prepare himself and his surroundings for this dawn of a new era, when man shall discover his soul in the spiritual unity of all human beings.'⁴⁹

3.3.2 Sun

In contrast to Tagore, who considers that India's problem is that of race, Sun believes that China, largely, has no race problem.

'The Chinese race totals four hundred million people; of mingled races there are only a few million Mongolians, a million or so Manchus, a few million Tibetans, and over a million Mohammodan Turks. These aliens races do not number altogether more than ten million, so that, for the most part, the Chinese people are of the Han or Chinese race with common blood, common language, common religion, and common customs---a single, pure race.'⁵⁰

It seems that, notwithstanding those 10 million minorities, Sun believes China is a 'pure' race and ignores the essential 'race' problem in China. For Sun, China's problem is political. Under the political oppression of the Great Powers, China is threatened by possible loss of country and annihilation of its race. While Tagore sees India's social problems as the reason why India could not resist the Nation's rule, Sun argues that the reason of China's weakness and of its inability to resist foreign invasion lies in its lack or loss of nationalism.

Unlike Tagore, who advocates a social civilization, Sun believes that the happiness and welfare of the people depends entirely on politics. His social ideal is to establish an all-powerful government, which would seek the welfare of the people. This is based on his theory of social evolution. According to him, human society has been evolving through several periods: the age of wilderness, the age of theocracy, the age of autocracy, and lastly the age of democracy. Human beings have now entered the era of democracy, and the advanced nations of the West have practiced democracy for more than a hundred years. The problem with democracy, according to Sun, is how to establish an all-powerful government that serves all. He refers, as we mentioned earlier to an American scholar's who wrote that, 'the great fear of modern democratic states is an all-powerful government which the people have no way of checking, but yet the finest thing would be an all-powerful government in the employ of the people and working for the welfare of all the people.'⁵¹ Sun believed that this problem could be solved within the framework of his own theory which advocated separating the political power of the people from the administrative power of government.

According to Sun, the principle of democracy is similar to the utopian 'Great Commonwealth' (大同社会) advocated by Confucianism in ancient China. 'Confucius and Mencius two thousand years ago spoke for people's rights. Confucius said "when the Great Doctrine prevails, all under heaven will work for the common goal (大道之行也、天下為公)". He was pleading for a free and fraternal world in which the people would rule.'⁵² Traditional Chinese political thinking recommends to appoint as emperor one who is capable and has a high morality, like Yao and Shun (堯と舜, the legendary sage kings in ancient China), and to let him take the political responsibility of organizing government and of seeking happiness for the people. The problem is that in reality most emperors in history lacked both capability and morality, cared only about their royal power and made no effort to promote people's welfare. In the modern history of China, because its corrupted government could not resist foreign domination, the Chinese people have been led to a situation of great destitution. Thus the aim of the Chinese revolution, according to Sun, is to remove the autocratic emperor and to establish a democratic government that promotes the people's welfare.

While Tagore says that the East should assimilate the West's spirit of freedom and law, Sun argues that China must absorb not the West's ideal of freedom and equality, but rather their nationalism. According to Sun, in Europe before their revolutions, a feudal system was still prevailing. Noble titles were hereditary; common people could not change their occupations and had no freedom of speech, movement, religion, etc. Thus, European people fought for liberty and equality because they had been under the direct oppression of despotism and were suffering from inequality and lack of freedom. To the contrary, China broke with feudalism two thousand years ago. Only the emperor's rank remained hereditary (within the same dynasty). Professional barriers have been entirely destroyed, and it was not totally impossible for a common person to become a minister. Chinese emperors were relatively liberal towards the common people. As long as their royal prerogatives were not challenged, emperors usually left people free to do whatever they desired. Apart from paying taxes, the Chinese people had little direct relation with the government, and they did not really care who was the emperor. The problem in China is not that Chinese people had too little freedom, but that they had too much freedom, and that they lacked an adequate political consciousness. The Chinese people were not directly subjected to oppression; rather they have suffered indirectly from the weakness of government. Hence, the aim of the Chinese revolution is in a sense opposite to that of revolutions in Europe. Its goal is not for the freedom of the individual, but the freedom of the nation, and the people must sacrifice their personal freedom for the sake of national freedom.

Sun's scheme for the Chinese future is to promote the political unity of the nation with the principle of nationalism; to establish a strong democratic government resting on the principle of people's sovereignty; and then to fight against foreign domination, repudiating unequal treaties, taking back custom rights; and also to

employ state power to promote industries, providing work for all workers. According to Sun, the state must take responsibility for providing the necessities of life to the people; and conversely, all people must fulfill their duty to the nation.

As we have seen, in international relations Tagore advocates the spiritual unity of human beings. Sun, for his part, calls for a world political civilization where morality reigns in international relations among nations. According to Sun, after becoming a wealthy and strong nation state under complete, popular rule, China should pursue "the royal way" in its relation to other nations: checking the strong and helping the weak, uniting the oppressed and fighting against the oppressors. It would thus contribute to the cause of supplanting European cosmopolitanism (which is supported by force without justice) with the spirit of true cosmopolitanism, and to the establishment of a world political unity. Contrary to Tagore, who calls on every individual to strive towards the spiritual unity of humanity, Sun appeals essentially to those who 'know and perceive first', the few originators or discoverers, to design for the people a complete and all-powerful benevolent government and a world political order.⁵³

4. conclusion

In conclusion, when nationalism is considered in a very broad sense, many similarities and differences can be found between Tagore's *Nationalism* and Sun's *The Three Principles of the People*. First, both insist on the mechanical dimension of Western nation state. However, their attitudes towards this state machinery are opposite. While Sun emphasizes that a nation can become strong and wealthy only if its state machinery is complete and all-powerful, Tagore strongly criticizes the dehumanizing effect of this mechanical organization. Second, both of them criticize the injustice of the West's oppression of the East, but they understand the nature of this oppression differently. What Sun criticizes is imperialism, that is, the Great Powers' oppression of the weak and small nations. In the case of China, what worries Sun, are 'the loss of the country and the annihilation of the race'. It seems that for him nationalism is good while imperialism is evil. China should revive its nationalism to build a united and strong nation state, and then to fight the imperialism of the West. Unlike Sun, Tagore regards nationalism as the culprit of the injustice of the West. Conflicts among Nations as well as the Nations' suppression of No-nations originate directly from the nature of the Nation, which is the creature of science and of selfishness. Thus Tagore is completely opposed to nationalism and urges No-nations not to turn to nationalism for the solution of their problems. The two authors' opposite attitudes towards nationalism are clearly exemplified by their different commentaries on Japan, Tagore's criticism of Japanese nationalism is in contrast to Sun's praise of Japanese nationalism and his cautioning against Japan's imperialist ambitions. Finally, though both of them emphasize the morality of Eastern civilization, they have very different social ideals and understandings of their own countries' problems. Sun's social ideal is the political unity of China, the establishment of an all-powerful government that seeks the welfare of the people. Sun claims that after China has become wealthy and powerful, it will help the oppressed and fight the oppressors, promoting an international morality among nations and the political unity of the world. Tagore believes that there is no future for nationalism other than conflicts and wars among Nations. Tagore's social ideal is that of a social civilization which is based on the moral and spiritual aspiration of men. According to Tagore, India's problem can only be solved by removing its outdated caste system and renewing its social ideals. In this process it is necessary to assimilate the spirit of law and freedom of the West. Tagore argues that by solving its own problem, India will contribute to solving the world problem. Tagore advocates the spiritual unity of all human beings and urges every individual to strive for it.

In short, it seems that while both Sun and Tagore have realized that the world situation had fundamentally

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changed with the coming into being of Western nation states and their imperialistic expansion, their interpretations are very different. Tagore completely denounces Western style nation state and nationalism, arguing that India cannot solve its own problem separately without solving (at least in part) the world's problem. Sun, to the opposite, has a positive evaluation of nationalism, arguing that China should follow the Western model of nationalism and build a strong nation state. While their similar understandings of the world situation might come from the fact that both India and China were then similarly under the oppression of Western imperialism, their almost opposite attitudes towards nationalism seem to have their origin in their different social ideals: Tagore's concern with the social and spirit ideal of men contrary to Sun's emphasis on politics.

Notes

- 1 Tagore was awarded the 1913 Nobel Prize for Literature, mainly due to his own translation from Bengali to English of his poem Gitanjali (or Songs of Offerings).
- 2 And Sun is still called 'the Father of the Nation (国父)' by Kuomintang government in Taiwan till now.
- 3 Tagore, Rabindranath. *Nationalism*. With an introduction by E. P. Thompson. (New Delhi: Rupa Paperback, 1992).
- 4 Sun Yat-sen, *San Min Chu I The Three Principles of the People*, translated by Frank W. Price, (Shanghai: The Commercial Press, 1929).
- 5 Canton (or Guangzhou), the capital of Guangdong province of China, was then the base of the revolutionary force. Sun's lectures on *The Three Principles of the People* were not finished as originally planned, due to his death in early 1925. Actually, the three principles of the people, as the core and catchword of Sun's revolutionary theory, was proposed as early as 1905; and Sun constantly revised this theory in the following two decades. See Marie-Claire Bergere. *Sun Yat-sen*. Translated by Janet Lloyd. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press. 1998
- 6 *Nationalism*, p. 51.
- 7 *Ibid.*, p. 86.
- 8 *The Three Principles of the People*, pp. 320-321. Chi-kuan in Japanese is 機関 /kikan.
- 9 *Nationalism*, p. 70.
- 10 *Ibid.*, p. 60-61.
- 11 *Ibid.*, p. 96.
- 12 *The Three Principles of the People*, p. 54.
- 13 『孫文・講演「大アジア主義」資料集』 陳徳仁・安井三吉 編 法律文化社 1989, p. 72. This text was never published in English and all quotations are translated from the original Chinese text of the lecture by myself.
- 14 *Ibid.*, p. 79.
- 15 *Nationalism*. p. 26.
- 16 *Ibid.*, p. 23.
- 17 *Ibid.*, p. 25.
- 18 *The Three Principles of the People*, pp. 134-135. Here, Sun talks mainly about the famous 8 words (17 Chinese characters) saying in Confucian classic *The Great Learning* (大学): 'search into the nature of things, extend the boundaries of knowledge, make the purpose sincere, regulate the mind, cultivate personal virtue, rule the family, govern the state, pacify the world (格物、致知、誠意、正心、修身、齊家、治國、平天下).
- 19 *The Three Principles of the People*, p. 360.
- 20 *Ibid.*, p. 70.
- 21 *Nationalism*, pp. 67-68.
- 22 *Ibid.*, p. 53.
- 23 *Ibid.*, p. 93.
- 24 *The Three Principles of the People*, pp. 14-15.
- 25 *Nationalism*. p. 21.

- 26 *The Three Principles of the People*, p. 79.
- 27 *Ibid.*, p. 84.
- 28 『孫文・講演「大アジア主義」資料集』 陳徳仁・安井三吉 編 法律文化社 1989
- 29 *Ibid.*, p. 40.
- 30 *Nationalism*. p. 73.
- 31 *Ibid.*, p. 37.
- 32 Moreover, as we will discuss later on, actually Tagore does not believe there is a unity of race in India.
- 33 *Ibid.*, p. 57.
- 34 *Ibid.*, p. 54.
- 35 *Ibid.*, p. 63.
- 36 *Ibid.*, pp. 62-63.
- 37 *Ibid.*, p. 36.
- 38 *Ibid.*, p.45.
- 39 *Ibid.*, p. 18.
- 40 *Ibid.*, p. 88.
- 41 *Ibid.*, p. 78.
- 42 *Ibid.*, p. 94.
- 43 *Ibid.*, p. 94.
- 44 *Ibid.*, p. 50.
- 45 *Ibid.*, p. 29.
- 46 *Ibid.*
- 47 *Ibid.*, p. 44.
- 48 *Ibid.*, p. 78.
- 49 *Ibid.*, pp. 80-81.
- 50 *The Three Principles of the People*, pp. 11-12
- 51 *Ibid.*, p. 293.
- 52 *Ibid.*, p. 169
- 53 The concept of equality that Sun advocates is the equality of political status. Sun believes that there is no natural equality as far as individuals' natural endowments and gifts are concerned. He inherited the Confucian idea that there are three groups of man according to their natural endowments, those who "know and perceive first", those who "know and perceive later", and finally those who "neither see nor perceive". The third group is said to constitute the majority in a society.

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A Comparison of Tagore's *Nationalism* and Sun Yat-sen's *The Three Principles of the People* from the Perspective of Nationalism

NIU Geping

Abstract:

This paper compares Rabindranath Tagore's *Nationalism* and Sun Yat-sen's *The Three Principles of the People* from the perspective of nationalism, understood in a broad sense. The similarities and differences of Tagore's and Sun's conceptions of nationalism are explored from three aspects: understandings of the Western nation state, the relationship between the West and the East as well as the connection between this relationship and problems specific to their own countries. Concerning the first point, both Tagore and Sun describe the Western nation state as a machine, but they have radically different attitudes towards it. Concerning the second point, both criticize the injustice of the West's oppression of the East, but they understand its origin differently. Concerning the third point, both emphasize the morality of Eastern culture, but they have very different social ideals and see their home countries' problems differently. In conclusion, while Tagore denies the legitimacy of the Western nation state and of nationalism, Sun largely believes that China should follow the Western model and develop its own nationalism in order to build a strong modern nation state.

Keywords: Rabindranath Tagore, Sun Yat-sen, *Nationalism*, *The Three Principles of the People*, nationalism