Sovereignty and Conceptual Change in Late Qing China[*]

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For centuries, China had held a position as supreme political and cultural sovereign in East Asia, and the ruling idea of inter-state relations referred to the power of the emperor ruling all-under-heaven(*tianxia* ô,ù≫). With the incursion by the European powers from the middle of the nineteenth century, the question of China's independence and position in international relations, and her position as the supreme sovereign of East Asia were challenged in practical politics, and with the gradual introduction of Western learning(*xixue* 西學) new ideas and concepts for China's international orientation were introduced. This article applies perspectives from conceptual history when considering the translation and adaptation of concepts related to the conceptual field of 'sovereignty' from the West. The article will show that, first, by the translation of Western literature and, later, through the native discourse of political issues, the notion of China as a sovereign and independent state in international affairs challenged and slowly replaced traditional interpretations of China as a suzerain in East Asia. Chinese intellectuals gradually adopted

new conceptual and political frameworks for understanding China in the larger family of nations. The article claims that this shift represents one of the watersheds, or *Sattelzeit*, as scholars of German *Begriffsgeschichte* would term it, in East Asia's historical transition to modernity.

Introduction

State sovereignty developed as a ruling principle among European states in the high middle ages after the demise of papal sovereign dominion on the European continent. By the end of the middle ages even the ideal of papal sovereign power in Europe had faded, and by the fourteenth century most of the larger European empires had been replaced by a number of smaller states operating on an equal footing in conducting their inter-state relations, each claiming God's authority in ruling their territory. Among these Christian states and between them and their neighbouring Muslim states treaties were signed as between autonomous and sovereign entities in order to solve and regulate issues of common interest. In this system, we find the early foundation of the modern system of international law.

In Zhou China a system of inter-state relations had been established prior to the unification under the Qin emperor in 221 BC. The area of central China was brought under one supreme ruler by the First Qui Emperor, a unification with many traits similar to the political situation in Roman Europe, but a unity which disintegrated with the fall of the Eastern Han dynasty in 220 AD. A number of smaller states in China carried with them the ideal of supreme rule through a period of continuous disintegration and re-integration until China was again unified in a new grand supra-"national" Chinese empire with the Sui, Tang and Song dynasties between the sixth and the thirteenth centuries. This is the point in history when Europe and China take radically different paths with regard to the development of inter-state relations and perspectives of international systems. Where the crucial notions of sovereignty and autonomy became pivotal in the development of criteria for internal and external recognition of states in Europe, China developed in quite a different direction when it came to international orientation until the second half of the nineteenth century. China was situated at the centre of a set of concentric circles of relations between the states in East Asia, relations based on the principle of China as suzerain in relation to neighbouring(in most cases) tribute-paying states.[1] In China, the idea of all-under-heaven(*tianxia* 天下), signifying the area and civilization under direct sovereign control of the early Chinese empires, was also retained during periods of state disintegration, and was only challenged towards the late imperial period, in the middle of the tenth century.

In China this traditional system involving a suzerain and a number of tributary states visualised in concentric circles around China and the Chinese emperor, was fundamentally challenged with the signing of the unequal treaties between China and the European powers from the 1840s,

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1) See Pomeranz, Kenneth & Steven Topic (2006), *The World that Trade Created: Society, Culture and the World Economy 1400 to the Present*, New York: M.E. Sharpe, pp.11~14.

and with the establishment of permanent foreign missions in Beijing during the 1860s. China had already in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries signed treaties with Russia(the Treaty of Nerchinsk and Treaty of Kiakhta) but none these did in any fundamental way challenge the traditional Chinese word orientation. The European powers did, however, challenge this world order in many different ways—both politically, symbolically and ideologically from the middle of the 19th century. Through the various treaties signed with the European powers China was gradually yet forcefully introduced to the practices, principles and customs of European international law.[2] China and Chinese intellectuals had never before been challenged as regards her supreme position in international relations. Now, the European notions of balance of power and sovereignty were introduced and gradually adopted in China's own international orientation, replacing the idea of a Chinese-centred, all-under-heaven. In this article, I aim to show how this conceptual shift represents one of the watersheds, or *Sattelzeit*, as scholars of German *Begriffsgeschichte* would term it, in the historical transition to modernity in East Asia. I will employ some perspectives from *Begriffsgeschichte*, conceptual history, in order to pinpoint the conceptual changes taking place.

Concepts as history

The German analytical orientation referred to as *Begriffsgeschichte*, or

conceptual history, lends much of its theoretical and methodological language of interpretation of the linguistic constitution of the modern word to the work by Reinhart Koselleck following the prior works of Otto Brunner and Werner Conze.[3] In contrast to discourse analysis developed by Michel Foucault and later through the works of Quentin Skinner, John Pocock and others of the Cambridge school, studying systems of argument and discourse, concept analysis is concerned with ideas and concepts represented by words. The enterprise of Koselleck's work has been to clarify the relationship between language, social history and the constitution of concepts. The main feature of this orientation is that concepts, and not words, are studied over time—often following their conceptual field back to antiquity but most prominently studying them during the period following the Enlightenment, and, thus, through the watershed period constituting the historical transition to modernity. By studying concepts, and not terms or lexicons, the limitations of the disciplines of narrow historical philology and lexicography were avoided. At the same time, conceptual history enabled these German scholars, in particular, to analyse and study the history of conceptual change as "present past", avoiding the pitfalls of historians constructing "past present" through present time images of how the past was like. Through this conceptual focus, it is, however, important not to identify a concept with one single word. By discussing semantic fields, and not the semantics of single words we are able to approach concepts and historical change as a part of intellectual and social history. This involves "defining a concept

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2) Described in more detail in Svarverud, Rune (2007), *International Law as World Order in Late Imperial China: Translation, Reception and Discourse, 1847-1911*, Leiden: Brill.

3) Most importantly Brunner, Otto, Reinhart Koselleck and Werner Conze(1972~1997), *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe. Historisches Lexicon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, Stuttgart: Klett.

not in lexical terms, but in terms of ranges of characteristic synonyms, antonyms, associated terms, forming a more or less unified part of a vocabulary at a given time".[4] I hope in this article to be able to indicate how these perspectives from *Begriffsgeschichte* can be fruitfully employed on conceptual change in one specific conceptual field in the history of transition to modernity in China.

In this framework we are interested in transformations, historical transformations of social and political realities—most often associated with emerging modernity. Social history and *Begriffsgeschichte* depend on each other but are not congruent. The actual events and changes in social history cannot be deduced wholly from written evidence and the study of conceptual change. What *Begriffsgeschichte* can demonstrate, however, are "innovative ventures which may have recorded or initiated new experiences".[5] A main point here is that changes may occur both in the socio-political reality and in the speech acts in any given sequence. "Reality may have long since changed before the transformation was ever given a name, and, likewise, concepts may have been formed that released new realities".[6] Koselleck has made it clear that German *Begriffsgeschichte* is not intended as an autonomous scholarly enterprise in its own right.

Begriffsgeschichte is a linguistic and semantic contribution to social and political history, according to Iain Hampsher-Monk. *Begriffsgeschichte* is concerned with the relationship between the linguistic/conceptual and the social/material domains. "Koselleck wants to use conceptual history to register 'a tension between concept and materiality' ".[7] In the following, I shall venture to demonstrate that the conceptual field of 'sovereignty' in late imperial China was construed both as a venture initiating new experiences and recording them. The introduction of a concept of sovereignty into the Chinese political discourse is, indeed, related to political and social history and not autonomous as an approach to the materiality of modern China. A conceptual analysis of the semantic field related to sovereignty in modern China may, however, in a distinct way, contribute to and complement the political history of the seminal transfer to modernity, as a *Sattelzeit* in recent Chinese history.

When addressing questions of conceptual transition in modern China, we are initially confronted with questions related to the translation of terms and the coining of new terms for new ideas.[8] Reinhart Koselleck has pointed out that new terms come to represent previously non-existent experiences or expectation in a language but that this new term cannot

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4) Hampsher-Monk, Iain, Karin Tilmans and Frank van Vree (1998), "A Comparative Perspective on Conceptual History—An Introduction," Hampsher-Monk, Iain, Karin Tilmans & Frank van Vree (eds.), *History of Concepts: Comparative Perspectives*, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, p.2.

5) Koselleck, Reinhart (1998), "Social History and Begriffsgeschichte," Hampsher-Monk, Iain, Karin Tilmans & Frank van Vree (eds.), *History of Concepts: Comparative Perspectives*, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, p.34.

6) Ibid., p.35.

7) Hampsher-Monk, Iain (1998), "Speech Acts, Languages or Conceptual History?," Hampsher-Monk, Iain, Karin Tilmans & Frank van Vree (eds.), *History of Concepts: Comparative Perspectives*, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, p.47.

8) For further studies of lexical change in late imperial China, see Lackner, Michael, Iwo Amelung & Joachim Kurtz (eds.) (2001), *New Terms for New Ideas: Western Knowledge & Lexical Change in Late Imperial China*, Leiden, Brill and Lackner, Michael & Natascha Vittinghoff (eds.) (2004), *Mapping Meanings: The Field of New Learning in Late Qing China*, Leiden: Brill.

possibly be new in a fashion that does not draw on a linguistic context already contained in that language.[9] This is evidently true when we study the coining of new terms in the Chinese language of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century China. New terms were translated and coined *en masse* to reflect the massive input of ideas and socio-political realities introduced into China at this time. We may study the process with which texts and terms were translated into the Chinese written language at the time. What constitutes a more fruitful enterprise in this context, however, is to substitute such an analysis with an examination of the process with which these new concepts were formed and how they acquired a semantic field of their own, often distinct from the semantic field of the term in the source language—which in the context of late-imperial China often was English, German, French, and, later, also, Japanese. This process of translation, adaptation and naturalisation, referred to as "translingual practice" by Lydia Liu,[10] may employ the four terms formulated in Koselleck's working hypothesis, aimed at influencing the direction of research; *Politisierung*(politicization), *Demokratisierung*(democratization), *Ideologisierbarkeit*(ideologisability), and *Verzeitlichung*(the changing conception of time).[11]

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9) Koselleck, Reinhart (1998), "Social History and *Begriffsgeschichte*," Hampsher-Monk, Iain, Karin Tilmans & Frank van Vree (eds.), *History of Concepts: Comparative Perspectives*, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, p.31.

10) Liu, Lydia (1995), *Translingual Practice. Literature, National Culture, and Translated Modernity—China, 1900-1937*, Stanford, California: Stanford University Press.

11) Boer, Pim den (1998), "The Historiography of German Begriffsgeschichte and the Dutch Project of Conceptual History," Hampsher-Monk, Iain, Karin Tilmans & Frank van Vree (eds.), *History of Concepts: Comparative Perspectives*, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, p.15 and Bödeker, Hans Erik (1998), "Concept–Meaning–Discourse. Begriffsgeschichte reconsidered," Hampsher-Monk, Iain, Karin Tilmans & Frank van Vree (eds.), *History of*

The coining of terms for 'sovereignty' in Chinese

As argued by Hans Erich Bödeker, the enterprise of conceptual history rests on the problematic category of the 'concept'. Koselleck has not entirely been able to remove an uneasiness about the lack of a stringent definition of the concept and a clear theoretical delineation of the differences between concept, meaning and word. In this context, however, we shall address this question in rather pragmatic terms, in line with much of Koselleck's own work in the *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, and analyse the semantic field of sovereignty in terms of related and parallel expressions. Bödeker states that: "It is not an individual concept that forms the subject of consciousness in *Begriffsgeschichte*, but the whole of a mutually self-supporting conceptuality. (⋯) *Begriffsgeschichte* analyzes concepts as elements in a linguistic or semantic field. (⋯) In particular, opposite, related, and parallel expressions must be analyzed in detail in their relation to the term under investigation".[12]

The Chinese language had no term for the idea, and no parallel materiality, it can be argued, of a sovereign state prior to the introduction of translated texts related to political theory and international law, following the Opium war and the subsequent Treaty of Nanjing in 1842. The notion of states having sovereign rights was derived from the European development of inter-state relations mentioned at the outset of

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Concepts: Comparative Perspectives, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, p.52.

12) Bödeker, Hans Erik (1998), "Concept–Meaning–Discourse. Begriffsgeschichte reconsidered," Hampsher-Monk, Iain, Karin Tilmans & Frank van Vree (eds.), *History of Concepts: Comparative Perspectives*, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, p.55.

this article and had thus far not had any bearing on the development of these relations in East Asia. The large enterprise of introducing various elements and features of "overseas matters" comprised in the comprehensive *Haiguo tuzhi*(海國圖志, *Illustrated Treatise on Overseas Countries*), first published in Yangzhou in 1844, contained among other things translations from texts related to political and geographical conditions in the West. The enlarged 1847 edition of the *Haiguo tuzhi* contained a few short translated passages from Emmerich Vattel's *Le Droit des Gens*(*Law of Nations*) touching upon questions related to the rights of states. The term *daoli*(道理) was introduced to convey an idea of states having rights.[13] The term *daoli* is an ancient binominal in the Chinese written language pointing to the rules, principles, reasons or patterns of matter.[14] The semantics introduced with the term *daoli* in the translation included in the *Haiguo tuzhi* is not entirely alien to the original connotations of the term, and is more an extended meaning of 'rule' or 'principle', applied to represent the connotations of the translated term 'rights'. It has been shown that the *Haiguo tuzhi*, in a number of cases introduced neologisms into the Chinese literary language.[15] No textual

evidence, however, suggests that the idea of states having rights—or individuals having rights, for that matter—employing the term *daoli*, was introduced into other texts or discourses in China in the 1840s or 50s following the translation of this term in the *Haiguo tuzhi*. It appears that ideas about the rights of a state, and the extended concept of its sovereignty, remained unreflected in the language and discourse in China until the middle of the 1860s.

When William A.P. Martin and his staff at the Tongwenguan(同文館) in Beijing translated Henry Wheaton's book *Elements of International Law* into Chinese and had it published with the title *Wanguo gongfa*(萬國公法) in 1864, the terminological questions regarding the translation of the terms 'rights' and 'sovereignty' had to be solved in a systematic fashion. Martin introduced the term *quanli*(權利) systematically as a technical translation of 'rights', and *zhuquan*(主權) for 'sovereignty', already in this translation of Wheaton's text, and continued this pattern systematically in the later translation of international law texts carried out at the *Tongwenguan* throughout the 1870s and 80s.[16] In the preface to Martin's 1877 translation of Theodore Dwight Woolsey's *Introduction to the study of international law; Designed as an aid in teaching, and in historical studies*, Martin explicates his considerations regarding the introduction of these terms:

Public law is a separate field of study and there should thus be devised a specific vocabulary for this purpose. Therefore, when there occasionally are

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13) For more details, see Svarverud, Rune (2000), "Jus Gentium Sinense: The Earliest Chinese Translation of International Law with some Considerations regarding the Compilation of *Haiguo tuzhi*," *Acta Orientalia*, Copenhagen: Munksgard, Vol.61-2000, pp.203~237 and Svarverud, Rune (2007), *International Law as World Order in Late Imperial China: Translation, Reception and Discourse, 1847-1911*, Leiden: Brill, pp.75~87.

14) *Hanyu da cidian* 漢語大詞典 (1986~1994), Shanghai: Hanyu da cidian chubanshe 漢語大詞出版社, Vol.10, pp.1076~1077.

15) Masini, Federico (1993), *The Formation of Modern Chinese Lexicon and Its Evolution Toward a National Language: The Period from 1840 to 1898, Journal of Chinese Linguistics Monograph Series* No.6, Rome: Department of Oriental Studies, University of Rome, p.30.

16) Svarverud, Rune (2007), *International Law as World Order in Late Imperial China: Translation, Reception and Discourse, 1847-1911*, Leiden: Brill, pp.87~112.

passages in the original text that are difficult to render comprehensively in Chinese, then the text in Chinese may sometimes seem strained. Take for instance the character *quan*(權). In this book it carries not only the meaning of someone being in power but also the meaning of the share ordinary people ought to obtain('rights'). Sometimes a character *li*(利) is added to this meaning, such as in the passage: 'the rights enjoyed by the common people' etc. Passages and terms like this may seem awkward at first sight but when one has encountered them several times one comes to realize that there is no way other than to use such an expression.[17]

Thus, these terms had been introduced as technical translations at the Tongwenguan in Beijing for these key issues in international relations, and we can also observe that these terms were quite rapidly disseminated with Martin's texts to other parts of East Asia, such as Korea and Japan. From a translatological point of view, it appears as if we have a simple case of coining new terms for these new ideas in East Asia. Before leaving the questions of term translations, I shall, however, emphasise that these term translations were not instantly accepted and employed by translators of international law and political science texts all over China. John Fryer also embarked on a project of translating international law texts into Chinese at the translation department of the Jiangnan Arsenal(江南製造局) in Shanghai in the 1880s and 90s. Whereas, in his main body of translations, he employed the term *zhuquan* for 'sovereignty' from Martin's Tongwenguan translations, he introduced a different fashion of translating terms related to

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17) Martin, William A.P. et.al. (tr.) (1877), *Gongfa bianlan* 公法便覽, Beijing: Tongwenguan 同文館, *fanli* 凡例 pp.2b〜3a.

'rights'(and 'duties').[18] Fryer's texts and technical translations, however, never became very influential in the field of political science and law. International law texts became important in the indigenous Chinese discourse of international relations and China's position in international politics after the Sino-Japanese war(1894〜95). At this time, Chinese students in Japan translated texts and introduced topics in international relations to a Chinese readership, based on their Japanese experiences and sources. That is how the initial influence of Martin's translations became influential again in China after a roundtrip through Japanese publications, Japanese university courses and Chinese students in Japan. Martin's vocabulary for 'rights' and 'sovereignty' was re-introduced into a decisive and heated debate on China's position in international relations in the early years of the 20th century.[19]

The semantic field of 'sovereignty'

To the semantic field attached to 'sovereignty' we must incorporate a number of related terms such as 'rights'(of states), 'independence' and 'sovereignty'. The idea of states having 'rights', expressed through the Chinese binominal *quanli*, has been discussed above. The binominal is already found in early texts, such as *Xunzi*(荀子) in the 3rd century BC

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18) For a more detailed discussion of Fryer's terminological innovations, see Svarverud, Rune(2007), *International Law as World Order in Late Imperial China: Translation, Reception and Discourse, 1847-1911*, Leiden: Brill, pp.112〜127.

19) For a discussion of the role and influence of Japan in the introduction of international law texts and terms in China, See Ibid., pp.163〜185.

but then with quite different connotations, referring to 'power' and 'profit'.[20] The use of this binominal as a technical term for 'rights' is clearly a terminological innovation by Martin and his team. *Quanli*, as a technical translation of the term 'rights' or 'recht' from European languages, was readily accepted by users of the written language in late imperial China[21] if we disregard Fryer's attempt to establish a contending translation of the terms related to 'rights' and 'duties'.[22] The term *zhuquan*, also coined by Martin as a technical translation of the term 'sovereignty', is an extension of the term 'rights', expressed with the character *quan*(權), in ancient texts, used to express the verbal 'to weight', 'to deliberate' and, thus, the authority to make such deliberations. The binominal *zhuquan* in pre-modern texts signified the authority, *quan*(權), of the ruler, *zhu*(主).[23] We must assume that Martin has coined the term by attaching the notion of 'main', 'ruling', *zhu*(主), to the idea of 'rights', *quan*(權), attaching these new or extended semantics of main or ruling rights(of a state) to the earlier semantics of *zhuquan*. John Fryer adopted the same term for the 'sovereignty' of states in all his translations of international law texts. In these early translations, the most frequent term

20) *Xunzi* 荀子(1919~1936), *Sibu congkan* 四部叢刊, Shanghai, Shangwu yinshuguan 商務印書館, p.1.8.

21) We find a small number of variants of Martin's term in some contemporary texts(權理, 利權). All of these were short-lived as technical term translations of the word 'right' from Western languages.

22) For more details of the connotations and applications of these terms in Chinese, see Svarverud, Rune (2001), "The Notions of 'Power' and 'Rights' in Chinese Political Discourse," Lackner, Michael, Iwo Amelung & Joachim Kurtz (eds.), *New Terms for New Ideas: Western Knowledge & Lexical Change in Late Imperial China*, Leiden: Brill, pp.125~143.

23) *Hanyu da cidian* 漢語大詞典 (1986~1994), Shanghai: Hanyu da cidian chubanshe 漢語大詞出版社, Vol.1, p.706.

used for 'independence'(of states) is *zizhu*(自主) (*zhiguo* 之國)—self-ruling(state). The binominal term *zizhu* had already, prior to Martin's translations, semantic connotations related to the notion of 'independent', 'self-ruling', consisting of the characters *zi*(自) for 'self' and *zhu*(主) for 'to rule', 'to decide'.[24] The term was introduced in Martin's translations, as a technical term for 'independence', and applied by Fryer in a similar fashion.

We see from this short exposition of a few important translated terms related to the semantic field of 'sovereignty' of states that Martin introduced these terms as technical term translations in his translated texts from the 1860s, and that Fryer in most of these cases accepted and adopted the same terms in his translations. When we study the entire scheme of terms in international law in late Qing China, we find that Fryer, in many other cases, did not accept or adopt Martin's term translations, and that the question of standardisation of term translations in China was only solved after the return translations of these terms through Japan from 1903 onwards.[25] In this case, related to 'sovereignty', however, it seems that the adaptation of these terms, in Japan, and the return of these terms through the Japanese texts and the Chinese students in Japan, did little to the adaptation of these terms. This gives us an indication that these terms and the related semantic field of 'sovereignty'

24) Ibid., Vol.8, p.1310.

25) Which is one of the main arguments in Svarverud, Rune (2001), "The Notions of 'Power' and 'Rights' in Chinese Political Discourse," Lackner, Michael, Iwo Amelung & Joachim Kurtz (eds.), *New Terms for New Ideas: Western Knowledge & Lexical Change in Late Imperial China*, Leiden: Brill.

was established in China in the 1890s, and that these terms, to a very little degree, was susceptible to change caused by the Japanese influence in the early twentieth century. I have elsewhere argued that international law, in all its realities and practical consequences, was only appropriated in China after the Japanese influence in early twentieth century. I will here claim, however, that the *Sattelzeit* of these key notions related to 'sovereignty' in China's international orientation may already be found prior to the major effects of the Sino-Japanese war, which in so many other respects is the key to understanding China's changing international orientation in the early 20th century.

The Chinese discourse on sovereignty

In order to scrutinize and substantiate this claim, we need to address the question of how the idea of sovereignty in China was addressed in the 1890s. My claim is that any notion similar to the idea of a state having a (tacit) sovereign right to its territory, its resources and its people, in an equal and balanced relationship to other states was unknown in China prior to the first introduction of this concept with Martin's translations, in the middle of the 1860s. The acknowledgement of the status as a state in a traditional Chinese and East Asian perspective was fundamentally hierarchical and based on power structures and reciprocal acknowledgement of relations of Confucian-like social structures, similar to the relationship between father and son, or between ruler and minister, etc. These perspectives were substantiated in China with perspectives from Social-Darwinism adopted from the West with early modernity in the latter

half of the nineteenth century.[26] Ideas of states with sovereign rights based on mutual and tacit recognition of a balance of power was novel in this traditionally power-based perspective of relations between states. One of the earliest attempts in the Chinese discourse to address the idea of states with sovereign rights in this context is represented in an article entitled "Zunxiapian"(尊俠篇), published in the *Shiwubao*(時務報), in July 1897.[27] In this article and in some of his later writings in *Qingyibao*(清議報), Mai Menghua(麥孟華), one of the most prominent advocates of reform in late Qing China, argues for the prospects of China's sovereign rights in a theoretical framework of Darwinism and utopian Confucianism. Mai claims that struggle is the natural means for survival in the present stage in evolution. He foresees, however, a utopian stage in evolution referred to as Datong(大同), and the Age of Great Peace(太平世) when all nations will obtain equal sovereign rights(平權), and when rights will be maintained in their natural form without any need, nor any desire, to encroach on the rights of others.[28] Liang Qichao(梁啓超) is more of a Darwinian purist and argues in favour of struggle at this time. In an article on the rights of people and nations(國權與民權), published as a chapter in his influential *Ziyoushu*(自由書)(*On Freedom*), in October 1899, he blames the Chinese

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26) Pusey, James Reeve (1983), *China and Charles Darwin*, Cambridge, Mass. & London: Harvard University Press.

27) *Shiwubao* 時務報 (1987), *Jindai Zhongguo shiliao congkan sanbian* 近代中國史料叢刊三編, Taibei: Wenhai chubanshe 文海出版社, Vol.325 (original vol.32, July 1897), pp.2137～2147.

28) Fore more details on the writings on sovereignty and national rights by Mai Menghua, see Svarverud, Rune (2007), *International Law as World Order in Late Imperial China: Translation, Reception and Discourse, 1847-1911*, Leiden: Brill, pp.195～200. See also Pusey, James Reeve (1983), *China and Charles Darwin*, Cambridge, Mass. & London: Harvard University Press, pp.112～114.

people for their lack of engagement in a struggle for China's sovereignty.[29] Liang argues that foreign encroachment on China's sovereign rights is only possible because of Chinese neglect. Liang's argument in 1899 is that Chinese sovereignty is in the hands of the Chinese people. Liang Qichao sees nothing but struggle ahead, and warns against the extinction of Chinese sovereignty.[30] Questions of the relationship between the rules of international law, the prospect of survival in the struggle for existence, the protection of nations and states through sovereign rights, and evolutionary theory inspired by Confucian utopianism are the dominant theoretical frameworks in the Chinese intellectual discourse in the latter half of the 1890s, as we also find it represented in the writings of Hunanese reformers like Tang Caichang(唐才常).[31] The procedural aspects of international law had not yet dawned on most Chinese intellectuals. Those aspects of international law would for the most part only enter Chinese discourse when Chinese students in Japan began explicating the details of international law in their publications from 1903 onwards, and, in particular, after the Russo-Japanese war, in Manchuria, in 1905. The theoretical aspects of national sovereignty and its implications for China's future, however, became clear to many intellectuals in China in the 1890s, both to those envisioning Chinese sovereignty as an outcome of international recognition and mutual consent, and to those conservative intellectuals arguing in favour of Chinese sovereignty through the

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29) Liang Qichao 梁啓超 (1996), *Yinbingshi zhuanji* 飲冰室專集, Beijing, Zhonghua shuju 中華書局, Vol.2, pp.24~25.

30) See Svarverud, Rune (2007), *International Law as World Order in Late Imperial China: Translation, Reception and Discourse, 1847-1911*, Leiden: Brill, pp.203~206.

31) For more details on the discourse in Hunan, See Ibid., pp.215~230.

consolidation of the ancient Chinese Confucian tradition, exemplified in the writings of Wang Renjun(王仁俊).[32]

The reformers in Hunan argued strongly in favour of establishing and maintaining Chinese sovereignty through education in international law. International law was incorporated into the new educational system, established in Changsha in the 1890s, and modelled on the modernised Japanese educational system, which gradually appeared as a model for modernisation also in China. Only after Chinese students brought the experiences of their legal studies in Japan back to China, however, did the particulars of the relationship between the rules and workings of international law and national sovereignty appear in the Chinese discourse. In the periodical *Waijiaobao*(外交報), published in Shanghai from late 1901,[33] and in Chinese-language student periodicals from Japan, such as *Hubei xueshengjie*(湖北學生界), *Jiangsu*(江蘇) and *Zhejiangchao*(浙江潮) starting from 1903, these law students discussed how sovereignty, in both domestic politics and in international relations, is based upon the procedures of international law and on the establishment of a modern national legal system. The independence, the sovereignty and the rights of China in international relations was directly linked to modern education and modernity more generally, and questions about extraterritorial rights in China as a principal issue were, at this time, brought into the Chinese discourse on sovereignty together with many other procedural aspects and terms in international relations. The semantic field of sovereignty is

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32) See Ibid., pp.211~215.

33) See Ibid., pp.257~259.

brought in direct communication with the procedural rules of international law.[34]

This linking of the concept of sovereignty with the many procedural rules—the "materiality"—of international affairs is also manifest in the discourse among Chinese revolutionaries in China and in Japan in the last years of the Qing dynasty before the revolution in 1911~12. We see in general that after the introduction of concepts related to sovereignty, independence and rights of states became part of the native Chinese political debate in the latter half of the 1890s, thus, indicating that the dawning of a *Sattelzeit* for the modernisation of international orientation in China, the procedural details and concepts of international law that comes to change the Chinese world orientation, only enters the discourse during the first decade of the twentieth century.

Conclusions

At the outset of this article, I indicated that I expected to be able link conceptual change in China with "materiality" and show how the conceptual field related to 'sovereignty' records and initiates innovative ventures as part of emerging modernity in China. This conceptual change is, again, related to Koselleck's claim that new terms draw on the linguistic context already contained in the language. In this article, I have endeavoured to show that the term innovations related to this semantic

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field of previously non-existent experiences, indeed, drew on a linguistic context already contained in the Chinese language. The latter may be the main reason for the relative success of Martin's term innovations in the 1860s, 70s and 80s.

W. A. P. Martin coined terms for 'sovereignty', 'independence', 'rights' of states, etc, in the 1860s after the early experiences with international events in China(the Opium war, etc). These events did not, however, enter into the mainstream, socio-political materiality of contemporary China, and these terminological innovations remained a secluded innovative experiment known only within a narrow circle of officials and foreigners in China. The late nineteenth century is, however, a period in Chinese history marked by more disturbing international issues linking Chinese politics with world politics—most notably the events of the Sino-Japanese war (1894~95). The war itself—but, perhaps even more so the Chinese experiences with Japan following the war, in terms of modernisation, education, political change etc—constitutes "innovative ventures initiating new experiences" in China and among broader layers of the Chinese (urban) population. The social history of this period may be complemented by perspectives from the conceptual history of the semantic field related to sovereignty. The discourse in the latter half of the 1890s in China sees a whole new field of conceptual orientations formulating frameworks for interpreting China in international relations. At the heart of this orientation we find the semantic field of sovereignty and terms related to rights, equality and independence of states. The conceptual field of sovereignty both initiated new experiences and recorded them as indications of this watershed period in Chinese social history. These new experiences

initiated by international ventures heralded the integration of the entire theoretical discipline of international law into China following a decade or so later.

As indicators of the process of conceptual change in China, we may employ the terms presented as a guide to influence the direction of research in Koselleck's working hypothesis. The main conceptual changes during the *Sattelzeit* leading up to modern times are described as initially developing into a period of *democratization* when concepts previously known only to an educated elite become accessible to other classes of society. Then, these concepts are *ideologised* and become ambiguous when they are used a polemic weapons. Finally, at the expense of the experiences they comprise, they assume more and more expectations and become future-oriented—become *politicized* and *temporalized*. In the framework of this hypothesis, we may conclude that these concepts related to sovereignty in early-twentieth-century China became *democratized* through the broadening discourse of international issues in China, and they gradually took on aspects of *ideology* when different groups in intellectuals, such as reformers, conservatives, revolutionaries and young students in Japan, began arguing for and against sovereign rights as an indication of China's international standing. It appears that the concepts related to sovereignty had not yet in Chinese *Sattelzeit* taken on aspects of *temporality* and become future-oriented, thus, leaving China, at this time, in terms of orientation towards the conceptual field of sovereignty, amidst a conceptual change towards a modern international orientation.

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