

Communications to the Editor

TO THE EDITOR:

In his article in the August 1992 issue of *JAS*, Young-tsu Wong proposed to reexamine the revisionist studies of Kang Youwei's role in the reform movement of 1898. In particular, he singled out the works by Huang Zhangjian and myself for his exercise. Insofar as "revisionism" is an apt word for the perspectives that Huang and I adopted in our respective writings, Wong failed to mention that our point of departure was the version of Kang's activities and the Hundred Days as told in accounts by Kang and by his disciple, Liang Qichao. There were early skeptics who had questioned the veracity of those accounts, and more recent scholars have exposed half-truths and inaccuracies in them (Kwong 1984:5–13). If there has been a "revisionism," it did not begin with Huang and Kwong in the past twenty years.

Given the level of discussion that the study of the 1898 reform has entered since the early 1970s and given his stated mission, it would have been imperative for Wong to offer a point-by-point, source-by-source refutation of what he considered revisionist biases. Instead he chose to review Kang's career during 1888–98, and to dispute only at selected junctures Huang's interpretation or mine. This approach merely served to bypass the main task that he set for himself and allowed him to avoid a systematic, coherent, direct, and comprehensive discussion of revisionist views. It also created ambiguity as to what Huang and I did say where we were not identified by name. Wong's claim at the outset that his version of the 1898 events was a "synthesis incorporating much new research data, my own and others" (Wong 1992:515) might even convey the impression that his article was a state-of-the-art review, that what he explicitly refuted was no longer tenable, and that what he omitted to mention by oversight or design had no historiographical relevance. Whatever the reasons for his selective approach, there are important gaps and omissions in his discussion that not only render his "reconsiderations" incomplete but also throw into doubt his objectivity and sense of fair play in scholarly debate. For my part, I can cite at least the following major instances in which my interpretation, though at variance with Wong's, was not given notice or discussed in any way:

I. Regarding the "emperor's faction" (*didang*) and the "empress's faction" (*boudang*) that were supposedly locked in a mortal struggle at the imperial court during and after the Sino-Japanese War (1894–95), I cautioned against a hasty equation of *dang* with a formal political "party" and against a facile acceptance of the so-called "emperor's faction" as a distinct, organized group. Based on the Grand Council lists of officials summoned for the daily audience with the Guangxu Emperor, I pointed out that those usually identified as faction members like Zhirui, Wen Tingshi, Changlin, and Wang Mingluan were not in close contact with the emperor. While Weng Tonghe in his capacity as Guangxu's longtime tutor appeared to be an exception, he owed his brilliant court career to the repeated favors bestowed on him by the Empress-dowager Cixi. Rather than a confirmed pro-emperor, anti-dowager partisan, Weng must be seen as a mediating force between Guangxu and his imperial aunt. The issue of war and peace, which has often been invoked in the two-party theory as a crucial factor in distinguishing the two groups, was also analyzed in this context (Kwong 1984:62–68). Wong ignores this line of "revisionist" analysis, along with the evidence presented, and goes to great lengths to rehabilitate the "Emperor's party" with Weng Tonghe resolutely in the lead.

II. My interpretation of the Qiangxue hui (Society for self-strengthening studies) also differed from the standard view. I defined two stages in the development of the Beijing society, the first marked by efforts of “scholar-celebrities” (*mingshi*) to form an association focused on China’s postwar reconstruction and by the growing dissensions among them and the second by the emergence of a compromise undertaking, a book depot, the Qiangxue shuju. A notice in the first issue (KH22/7/1) of the *Shiwu bao* (The Chinese progress [sic]), which Liang Qichao edited in Shanghai in 1896–97, supports this two-stage appraisal (Liang Qichao, et al., 1967:15). Kang was involved in the first stage of the development but not in the second. By then he had already left for the south. Wong’s treatment of the Beijing Qiangxue hui is curiously sketchy, citing only Kang’s chronological autobiography as his source and seemingly oblivious to my interpretation of the episode.

III. In discussing Kang’s rise in Beijing in 1897–98, I suggest that Zhang Yinhan, a former Qing Minister to the United States, Spain, and Peru and one of the two moving forces (with Li Hongzhang) in the Zongli Yamen after the Sino-Japanese War, was more instrumental than Weng Tonghe in bringing Kang to Guangxu’s attention (Kwong 1984:136–39). Zhang and Kang came from the same native district of Nanhai in Guangdong, a regional connection that figured prominently in old-style patronage politics. Entries from Zhang’s unpublished diary also show that in the early half of 1894, Kang frequently called at Zhang’s Beijing residence. When the coup of 1898 took place and the order for Kang’s arrest was issued, Zhang’s house was ransacked by the authorities “for a certain Cantonese,” and Sir Claude MacDonald, the British Minister to China, even exchanged some “joculous remarks” with Zhang about the incident (Kwong 1984:220). That Kang had been Zhang’s protégé seemed a well-known fact to the court, now again directly under Cixi’s control, and it explained Zhang’s arrest and near summary execution with the six reform officials during the coup.

Wong completely ignores the evidence and arguments that I presented and insists, “*In fact*, it was Weng [Tonghe] who eventually recommended Kang to the Emperor” (*italics added*) (Wong 1992:519), while entirely omitting the role that Zhang played in Kang’s ascent in Guangxu’s attention. The neglect of Zhang is not only a serious oversight in any discussion of Kang’s activities in Beijing in the 1894–98 period, but it also makes Wong’s explanation of Weng Tonghe’s dismissal, a topic to which we turn next, necessarily one-sided.

IV. I placed Weng’s sudden ouster from his powerful court position at the outset of the Hundred Days in the three-fold context of Weng’s deteriorating relationship with Guangxu, of Guangxu’s increasing reliance on Zhang Yinhan, especially in matters of diplomacy and Western learning, and of the mutual rivalry between Weng and Zhang for Guangxu’s confidence. I explicitly argued that it was Guangxu, and not Cixi, who dismissed Weng from all his posts. I also made one of the few attempts in the literature to explain the timing and circumstances surrounding Weng’s disgrace (Kwong 1984:146–49, 160–65, 241–42). Wong agrees that Guangxu was responsible for Weng’s fate and names five “modern scholars” (including Huang Zhangjian) who share the same view but elects not to refer to me nor to my interpretation of this event (Wong 1992:524).

V. On Kang’s only audience with Guangxu that took place on June 16, 1898, I amended Kang’s report that the meeting had lasted two and a half hours by citing Zhang Yuanji’s recollections. Zhang was recommended by the Hanlin scholar, Xu Zhijing, in a memorial to Guangxu along with Kang, Liang Qichao, Tan Sitong, and others. Kang and Zhang were the first two of the above-named whom Guangxu eventually interviewed. Considering the fact that both Liang (a *juren*) and Tan (an

expectant prefect with a purchased title) had even less distinguished academic credentials than Kang (a *jinshi*), Kang's imperial audience was not exactly a unique favor granted by Guangxu, as Wong claims (Wong 1992:526). Zhang Yuanji later tried to dispel the misconception about Kang's supposedly lengthy interview at the palace. In a note written to a friend in 1930, he stated categorically, "It did not happen (*Bingwu qishi*). I was summoned for an imperial audience on the same day as Kang. Kang went in first and came out after a mere ten-odd minutes." (Wang Zongyan 1977:124) This would be a trite point if Wong had not repeated Kang's own inflated estimate of "two and a half hours" as proof of Guangxu's special treatment of Kang, while overlooking an eye-witness's conflicting testimony.

Wong's selective approach, not unlike guerrilla tactics, manifests an evasiveness that enables him to pass off as "facts" pure conjectures, unqualified statements and items of misinformation (such as the identity of Li Duanfen and Jiang Biao) (Wong 1992:532, 533). After no court official was willing to forward Kang's draft memorial to the throne in 1888, according to Wong, "[c]opies of it were *widely* circulated among interested officials" and Weng Tonghe "was *clearly impressed* by Kang's ideas and courage" (italics added) (Wong 1992:516). These bland statements are made without documentation. Numerous instances of hyperbole, traceable either to the Kang-Liang sources or to Wong's persistent effort to play up Kang's importance, can be found throughout his discussion.

Wong also seems unaware of Guangxu's daily court routine when he suggests that during the Hundred Days, Guangxu relied on the Grand Council's junior secretaries, such as Yang Rui and Tan Sitong, in formulating his reform policies, while avoiding the grand councilors (Wong 1992:526). Even if we discount the fact that Yang and Tan were at their posts for only nineteen days, and not 100, before they were arrested during the coup, Wong evidently has no clear understanding of the imperial framework for decision-making, policy consultation, and document traffic during this period. Not only did Guangxu continue to interview daily the grand councilors (but not the junior secretaries) and refer incoming memorials on reform to them for their comments and recommendations, but he also explicitly instructed Yang, Tan, and their colleagues (Lin Xu and Liu Guangdi) to submit their views on reform in writing to him through their superiors in the Grand Council, namely, the grand councilors (Kwong 1984:180–81). This lack of understanding of the way the throne operated in 1898 also makes suspect the kind of archival research that Wong claims to have carried out. He obviously did skim through some of the archival collections at the First Historical Archives and at the Palace Museum Library, both in Beijing. But none of his argument is really built on his own original findings from a vigorous "raking and combing," to use a favorite Chinese expression, through the archival records. Anyone who is conversant with the literature can readily recognize that Wong has relied more on the detailed research carried out by Kong Xiangji (1988) than his handful of citations would fully acknowledge.

I turn now to the specific points on which Wong takes issue with me. Wong's overall complaint is that I considered Kang "an insignificant figure" and that I deprived him of "any significant role" in the 1898 reform (Wong 1992:515, 539). Either Wong completely misrepresents my position, or I should be faulted for devoting five of the chapters in my book to someone with no historical significance at all. My purpose, rather, was to scale down Kang's exaggerated importance in the historiography and to redefine, as precisely and clearly as the sources would permit, his true significance in the events of 1898. I might even argue, at the risk of seeming in accord with Wong's hagiographical position, that the course of the Hundred

Days would probably have been quite different had Kang and his co-conspirators not been on the Beijing scene.

Wong also takes exception to my characterization of Kang's memorial draft of 1888 as "a routine exercise in moral rhetoric" (Wong 1992:516). It is true that I did not see much originality, nor little of its impact, if any, on Beijing officialdom, in Kang's document. Much of his discourse dwelt on themes that were part and parcel of the *qingyi* (pure discussion) or *qingliu* (disinterested group) tradition from at least the 1860s on: that the imperial court should refrain from indulging in entertainment and palace works at a time of dynastic crisis; that communications between ruler and ruled (or, the *yanlu*, "avenue of opinion") should be kept open; that, since Guangxu was about to assume the full reins of government in the following year, his personal attendants (the eunuchs) should be carefully chosen. Kang did criticize the "Self-strengthening" tradition since the 1860s as a failure. But he was short on details on how China might strive to achieve more effective change (Kwong 1984:85–86). If prominent courtiers like Weng Tonghe refused to forward Kang's draft to the throne, it was not because, as Wong suggests, it contained outrageously daring or original proposals, but rather because of its offensive language: its scathing tone and blunt criticisms of both the principal imperial personages, Cixi and Guangxu, to whom he addressed his memorial.

Wong also blames me for omitting "the recollections of those who were moved to tears by Kang's oratory" at the Baoguo hui (Society to protect the nation) meetings (Wong 1992:523). But whose recollections? Wong does not cite any. References to the tearful display may indeed be found in Kang's chronological autobiography (Jian Bozan, et al., 1953:IV, 143) and in Liang Qichao's *Wuxu zhengbian ji* (1969:81), problematic sources both. Wong might be more forthcoming and identify other participants' recollections, if these were, indeed, available.

Turning to another major point of controversy, Wong observes that I should not have questioned that Tan Sitong and Yuan Shikai had actually discussed the plan of a forceful takeover of the Summer Palace at their meeting on September 18 (Wong 1992:536). He quotes a letter by Liang Qichao to Kang in 1908 in which Liang referred to their "secret plot of 1898" (*wuxu mimou*). I have found Liang's remark vague to the point of ambiguity (Kwong 1984:304n92). On the strength of this single cryptic allusion alone, the plot cannot be considered to have been "unequivocally confirmed," as Wong declares. Wong also refers to Bi Yongnian's recently discovered account of the conspiracy. This document does contain relevant material for the appraisal of the activities of the Kang group in those final days and should be duly examined. But before it can be embraced as a compelling source of new evidence, it is necessary to go beyond the general enthusiasm evinced for it by scholars to investigate its origins and contents. There are questions like: Why did Bi compose it several months after the coup and offer it to the Japanese authorities? How privy was he to Kang's plan, given the mutual dislike that he shared with Kang's brother, Guangren, toward one another? Why did he report, contrary to received wisdom, that Kang Youwei was also present at Tan's clandestine meeting with Yuan? Like any document bearing on a historical controversy, Bi's record ought to be thoroughly analyzed as a source of reliable evidence. So far this has not been done by the scholars who have cited it. In short, both Liang's letter to Kang in 1908 and Bi's account of the plot, which Wong invokes to substantiate his view on the anti-dowager conspiracy, are not conclusive enough to allow a real breakthrough. What exactly transpired at the Tan-Yuan meeting remains, as I maintained in my book, a "moot point."

Wong asserts that I greatly underestimate the number of Kang Youwei's memorials submitted to the throne during the Hundred Days (Wong 1992:527). I have already reiterated my reasons for adopting a more cautious approach to this problem (Kwong 1987:217–18), and there is no need to repeat them here. At issue is not just the document count, but the appraisal of Kang's role in 1898 as well. Wong's strategy to make Kang the mastermind of the reforms consists of two prongs: first, to ascribe to him as many memorials as the slightest suspicion of Kang's authorship would permit (hence, over 70); and second, to isolate Kang as the only source of influence at work when Guangxu formulated his reform policies. For a proposal in a memorial to be translated into policy during the Hundred Days, it usually had to pass through a three-stage process: referral to some board or official for review, recommendation by the referee, and Guangxu's final decision on the recommendation (Kuang 1988:1117–18). Sometimes Guangxu sidestepped the review process and acted directly on a proposal. Still, in most other instances, a reform edict was issued, while both its originator and the process of formulation were unknown. Because the reform edicts did not always identify the memorialists whose submissions had initiated them, one is well advised to keep abreast of the procedural alternatives in explaining Guangxu's policies. In dealing with this problem, Wong causally links Kang's proposals to Guangxu's reform edicts without first tackling the matter of imperial decision-making. His technique demonstrates, therefore, more conviction than sound methodology.

Wong's repeated references to Kang's "junior position," "junior status," being "without political influence," and "insufficient prestige and influence" appear noticeably at odds with his assertions of Kang's prominent role in 1898 (Wong 1992:525, 539–40). Thus, his comparison of Kang to Lord Shang of Qin and to Wang Anshi of Northern Song, reformers holding solid ministerial portfolios, is also inept and far-fetched (Wong 1992:525). In addition, the fact that Guangxu only once received Kang for an audience cannot be readily explained away. Wong's argument that Kang could communicate with the throne only in memorials because of his inferior status is vacuous. Being of low official standing was not some birth defect that could not be remedied. Guangxu's power in this period, although circumscribed, was still quite sufficient for him to make personnel decisions (as in the sacking of Weng Tonghe, the dismissal with one stroke of all six leading members of the Board of Ceremony, and the appointment of the four Grand Council junior secretaries) and, indeed, to elevate Kang's standing if he had so chosen. He did not have to make Kang the leading grand councilor. But he might at the very least have summoned him for a second interview!

Finally, Wong basically reaffirms that Yuan Shikai's disclosure of the anti-dowager plot to his superior, Ronglu, was what set the coup d'état of 1898 in motion. He does not address the questions which Huang Zhangjian and I have put forward, respectively, in disputing this familiar scenario and fails, therefore, to show how his defense of the discredited view advances our understanding of this important event.

Wong's article represents the latest attempt to reinforce a Kang-centered interpretation of the history of the 1898 reform. Yet, through the Hundred Days, Kang remained at the periphery of the imperial power structure, desperately seeking to advance himself closer to the center. His recourse to a military solution near the end of the period was but a last-ditch maneuver that he hoped would clear his path of some of the obstacles. Since he had not been able to control and dominate events, much of what happened at the time initially had nothing to do with him. But because of the narrow and one-sided historiographical perspective that has been focused

on him, developments unrelated to his own, quite marginal activities, have been either overlooked or pushed aside as an insignificant backdrop. The following examples will suffice. Guangxu had designed a four-year grand plan of China's naval development with financial contributions from the provinces. He also ordered a massive review by more than 372 court officials of Feng Guifen's *Jiaobinlu kangyi* (Protest from the Jiaobin Studio) from the early Tongzhi period. In addition, he had Zhang Zhidong's *Quanxue pian* (Exhortation to study) reprinted for distribution to the provincial authorities because of his appreciation of Zhang's balanced discourse on change. Many others had memorialized the throne and some were able to inspire reform policies. The memorial by Yuan Chang, the newly appointed provincial treasurer of Jiangsu, for instance, led to the publication of seven imperial edicts on September 14 (Kuang 1988:1109–12, 1118). Yuan's submission, like numerous others now forming part of the voluminous archival materials, published or otherwise, seldom gets a mention, much less an analysis, from scholars (Guojia dang'an ju 1958). When the overall character of the reform of 1898 is to be defined, when the general significance of the period in the context of late-Qing history is to be appraised, researchers like Wong, constricted as they are by their Kang-centered perspective, are singularly unable to see the larger picture and offer a comprehensive assessment. They have carried out Kang studies, not real research on the Hundred Days.

In Wong's portrayal, Kang appears as one-dimensional, almost historically unreal. No one could intrude upon Beijing politics out of nowhere, like crashing a teenagers' party. In my own study, partially designed to gain a better understanding of Kang's role, I traced his progress through a developmental scheme from his first initiation to the scholar-official environment in Beijing in 1888 to his emergence as a notable scholar-celebrity in 1898, taking note of the breakthroughs and frustrations that he experienced at every step along the way. Also, I sought to evaluate Kang's effectiveness as a reform leader not so much in terms of his motives as in terms of his social image: how he was perceived by others and how such perceptions enhanced or hampered his chances of success. To assume that scholar-celebrities and court dignitaries would automatically flock to Kang for advice and guidance and place themselves at his service is naïve and savors of historical fantasy. Moreover, I gave due weight to the political-institutional factors that had imposed real limitations on Kang's activities. Whatever extraneous administrative and decision-making arrangements Guangxu might have set up in 1898 to facilitate reform, and these were preciously few, they did not supplant or displace the original structure. This, I submit, is where Wong's study is at its weakest. Kang appears almost like a magnanimous superforce, forging high-court policies in absentia, while a spellbound Guangxu meekly followed his cues.

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YOUNG-TSU WONG REPLIES:

Luke Kwong complains that my criticism of his book tends to be selective, but in presenting my alternative account I think it quite legitimate to select his most controversial arguments and take issue with them. Expounding Kwong's propositions point by point and refuting them systematically were not the intentions of my article; nor did I intend to review the whole history of the 1898 reform. My purpose was mainly to reconsider the importance of Kang Youwei's role in the reform movement so smoke-screened by existing revisionist works. Kwong and Huang Zhangjian were chosen because among modern scholars they represent the most dramatic revisionist views. While Huang considers Kang a conspirator rather than a reformer, Kwong regards Kang as more onlooker than prime mover during the Hundred Days, and both represent drastic and fundamental departures from the conventional interpretations of Kang and the reform.

Kwong argues that he considers Kang a significant historical figure in the 1898 reform because he devoted five chapters of his book to Kang, but obviously the main point of his book is to scale down drastically Kang's role in the summer of 1898. Has he now accepted a larger role for Kang in 1898 and accepted evidence based on large numbers of newly available archival sources and recent research works? He does not say so. Instead, while accusing me of misrepresenting him, he grossly misrepresents my portrayal of Kang "as one-dimensional, almost historically unreal."

My article specifically documents Kang's importance as an "idea transmitter" during the reform. I calculated that in 1898 Kang had delivered no less than seventy memorials, memoranda, and notes, not counting pamphlets, to the court in others' names or his own. This supports Kang's claim that he had been busy writing during the summer. The more complete version of Kang's 1898 memorials, I hope, will be published, but Tang Zhijun's 1981 selection of Kang's political writings already included fifty of Kang's 1898 memorials. My study shows how ideas voiced by Kang Youwei influenced history at this critical juncture. The fact that Kwong quickly dismisses the number of Kang's memorials and their significance shows that he did not even "skim through some of the archival collections at the First Historical Archives and at the Palace Museum Library." His book, for instance, cited the "Memorials

of a Distinguished Scholar,” but really did not use it. His rejoinder makes me wonder if he has yet “raked and combed” this valuable source.

I am puzzled by Kwong’s continuing inability to see the more subtle meaning of Kang’s 1888 memorial which I have elaborated (Wong 1992:516). Its significance lay not in the originality of his ideas but in his bold request to the throne to replace the traditional Chinese state inherited from the Han-Tang empire with a modern state modeled on the West. Even more puzzling is Kwong’s insistence that he still finds Liang Qichao’s 1908 secret letter to Kang ambiguous, so that the “secret plot of 1898” remains to him a “moot point.” But the language of the secret letter, in which Liang urged Kang not to reveal the 1898 plot, was crystal-clear. Kwong, too, misread Weng Tonghe’s comment about Kang’s memorial, “its language provocatively straightforward” (*yu tai xuzhi*), in Weng’s November 29, 1888, diary entry. When Weng refused to deliver it, he was obviously referring to its contents (Weng 1925, 14:5878). Kwong insists that Weng’s refusal was due to Kang’s “offensive language,” or terminology, and not to its unwelcome ideas. My study has shown that Kang’s presented memorials are far more formal and courteous than the draft or published versions to which Kwong refers. Kwong should ask himself, why should Kang, who desperately tried to put forth his ideas to the throne, use counterproductive “offensive language”? Note also that Kwong wrongly translates Feng Guifen’s famous book as “Protest from the Jiaobin Studio.” While in the colloquial, modern Chinese *kangyi* usually means “protest,” those who know traditional usage should be expected to recognize an allusion to the *Hou Hanshu* (History of the Latter Han) phrase in Feng’s title, “The Straightforward Words from the Jiaobin Studio.” As readers of Feng’s book know, it was not a work of protest but of straightforward words.

Kwong asserts that I am “unaware of Guangxu’s daily court routine” and of “the political-institutional factor.” Here he has raised an important point; however, I see the weakness as not mine but his own. Kwong’s interpretation is so dependent on the “routine” and “establishment” that he forgot about the reforms aiming precisely at changing the routine and the establishment. The eventual failure of the attempts to bring about fundamental structural change in 1898 should not conceal the hard and heroic efforts of the Hundred Days, in which Kang was clearly and deeply involved. Some changes were made, such as allowing low-ranking officials and even commoners to present views to the throne or abolishing the eight-legged essays to liberate the younger generations of scholar-officials from the traditional mind-set.

Still, the attempts to institute a new political structure—whether creating a Planning Board or opening the *Maoqin dian*—were cut short by the coup. Knowing the setbacks to the reform that quickly replacing conservative senior officials could bring, the Guangxu Emperor had delegated actual powers to the reformist junior officials, as Kang advised, while keeping the familiar seniors in office. In the Chinese political tradition, this was a common strategy. Hence, the maneuver should not blind us to the actual importance of the reformers who were in “junior positions” or “junior status” during the period of the reform. The four junior councilors, for example, were the throne’s real secretaries, with the special privilege of “participating in the reforms” (*canyu xinzheng*), by helping the Emperor read and comment on memorials and proposals. The Emperor also encouraged them to submit their own proposals, which, according to the old rules, would have first gone through senior councilors. The importance of the juniors’ role can be seen in their executions after the coup, while the senior officials survived unpunished.

From the outset of the reform the Guangxu Emperor wanted to replace senior conservatives and was reluctant to follow the old court routine. His only audience

to Kang, for instance, was a “rule-breaking” (*poli*) event. Yet, Kwong argues that His Majesty could have appointed Kang to a higher office and seen him often. My view is that the Emperor preferred changing to breaking the rules and, therefore, once new rules were set, Kang Youwei, Liang Qichao, and other reformers would surely occupy important positions in the Planning Board or in the *Maoqin dian*. Besides, as I show in my article, Kang was exceptionally busy compiling materials that provided information for the Emperor. Kang’s younger brother Guangren, in a letter written in the summer of 1898, explained to his friend that he could not leave Beijing because he had to help his elder brother who was busy meeting with visitors and compiling materials for the Emperor. After the imperial audience, Guangren continued, his elder brother became even busier as the Emperor constantly asked for the pamphlets Kang was compiling (Kang Guangren 1926, 6:1a–b).

With regard to the length of Kang’s only audience, the skeptic Kwong becomes curiously uncritical of Zhang Yuanji’s 1930 recollection. Kwong does not note that many ex-reformers, including Zhang, bitterly blamed Kang for the failure of the reform movement. My judgment is that Zhang’s “a mere ten-odd minutes” is absurd, given Guangxu’s “special treatment of Kang.” As is said, the Emperor broke the rules by insisting on seeing Kang. Prince Gong tried to prevent it, or at least to postpone it, by arranging the well-known interview for Kang at the *Zongli Yamen* with top-ranking officials. Despite Kang’s “maverick performance” during that interview, the Emperor still wanted to see him in person. Moreover, on May 26 and 27, 1898, shortly before his imperial audience, the Emperor repeatedly instructed Weng Tonghe to present him with copies of Kang’s works. Weng’s reluctance and criticism of Kang goaded the Emperor into fury (Weng 1925, 19:8013–14). If these are not enough proofs of “special treatment,” Kwong should know the Emperor specially treated Kang as “a distinguished scholar” in 1898. Granted that now the exact length of the audience can never be precisely determined, but given the Emperor’s “interest” in Kang, a long audience certainly makes greater sense than a shorter one. Incidentally, Zhang Yuanji in his September 21, 1898, letter to Wang Kangnian (1860–1911), while denouncing Kang as an “ignoble man,” nonetheless attributed to Kang the merits of “lifting the [reformist] atmosphere” (*kai fengqi*) (Wang 1986, 2:1738). Thus, in 1898, Zhang, although critical of Kang, still considered him a central figure.

Kwong maintains that “Zhang Yinhuan was more instrumental than Weng Tonghe in bringing Kang to Guangxu’s attention.” I do not agree. Zhang (1837–1900) probably made a recommendation, and obviously had spoken favorably about Kang before the Emperor as He Bingti (Ping-ti Ho) pointed out in his 1941 article on Zhang’s career. Yet, no less than five or six other officials had recommended Kang, and presumably Kang called on hundreds of officials’ and literati’s residences in Beijing between 1888 and 1898. But none of them had the prestige and influence of Weng Tonghe, who enjoyed a rare, intimate personal relationship with Guangxu between 1886 and 1898. For the obvious reasons, Weng publicly denied his crucial recommendation of Kang after the coup. Many historians find strong evidence indicating that Weng had tampered with his diary in order to conceal his reformist interest as well as his friendship with Kang (cf. Hsiao 1957:199; Tang 1982, 1:290–91). Weng himself incidentally admits, in a letter written at the outbreak of the coup and discovered after 1949 in China, that he had not only recommended Kang and Liang to the Emperor but also tried to defend his recommendations as being “selfless and aboveboard” (*Guangming ribao*, July 7, 1955; Tang 1982, 1:295).

Zhang Yinhuan’s background further explains why he could not have played the role Kwong attributes to him. Zhang was an able negotiator and diplomat, and

consequently the Emperor saw him often in times of intensive diplomatic crises. But Zhang simply lacked the status required in Qing court life, for he had climbed “the ladder to success” without having passed any of the prestigious examinations, while Weng had full credentials through winning first-place honor in the metropolitan examinations. Given his own extraordinary pride and intellectual arrogance, Kang would not be comfortable to be mentored, sponsored, or patronized by a person such as Zhang, even though they both came from the same “native district” in Guangdong. On the other hand, Kang’s eagerness to be associated with Weng is beyond any doubt. For example, Kang compiled a thoughtful, even brilliant, book on Chinese calligraphy (*Shujing*) in order to impress Weng, an established calligrapher himself, as a stepping stone to a closer personal relationship. Also, Kwong overlooks Zhang’s own testimony that Kang had asked Zhang to introduce him to Weng, not directly to the Emperor. Weng, who previously had refused to see Kang, soon changed his mind and recommended Kang to the throne (Jian 1953, 1:492). Kwong points out that “Zhang’s house was ransacked by the authorities ‘for a certain Cantonese’ . . .” Plainly, the authorities had jumped to the conclusion that the Cantonese Kang might hide in the Cantonese Zhang’s house. Yet, another individual, Zhang Yuanji, who knew both of them well, wrote during 1898 in a personal letter, “[the authorities] first went to Qiaoye’s (Zhang Yinluan’s) house to find Kang; it was extremely strange (*guaiji*)!” (Wang 1986, 2:1738). I take Zhang Yuanji to mean it was an improbable place to look for Kang. Zhang Yinluan was arrested and punished after the coup, but nowhere does his indictment suggest that he was condemned because of Kang, while Weng, although dismissed at the outset of the reform, was severely condemned after the coup for the specific reason that he had praised and recommended Kang. Thus, I retain my conclusion that “it was Weng who eventually recommended Kang to the Emperor.”

No scholar seriously considers the so-called “emperor’s party” (*didang*) a formal party or a “distinct, organized group”; nor was there a corresponding “dowager’s party,” so I placed the terms in quotation marks. In a strict sense, as Wang Daxie noted, “Wen Tingshi (1856–1904) was the only one [who] deserved to be called a member of the emperor’s party” (Wang 1986, 1:735). It was not until the late stage of the Hundred Days that the two factions became “locked in a mortal struggle at the imperial court.” For Weng Tonghe to be seen as the leader of the loosely termed “emperor’s party” enhanced rather than diminished his role as “a mediating force between Guangxu and his imperial aunt.” After the coup, Weng felt that had he remained at the court he would have prevented the “scoundrel Kang” from acting in such a mad way (Weng 1925, 19:8285); perhaps he could have. Upon the death of Prince Gong, Weng not only was *de facto* head of the “emperor’s party” but had also captured the leadership in the imperial government. But serious mistakes he made caused his sudden downfall, including that “in attacking Kang Youwei in front of the emperor he was committing the folly of trying to stop the bubbling of boiling water by stirring it” (Hsiao 1957:188). It is clear that Kang was the major factor in Weng’s sudden ouster. Kwong’s suggestion that Weng’s rivalry with Zhang Yinluan caused “Weng’s deteriorating relationship with Guangxu” ignores that Zhang was not a key factor of Weng’s dismissal. After Weng was ousted, it was Wang Wenshao, not Zhang Yinluan, who replaced him. Actually, Zhang was more a rival of Li Hongzhang and had worked closely with Weng since 1895. Eventually Weng showed displeasure with Zhang, but there was never much rivalry. Although Kwong also thinks that Weng was dismissed by the Emperor, his book cannot ascertain “the immediate cause of Weng’s disgrace” (1984:164).

I hold that during the reform Kang filled an important advisory role, comparable in influence, although not in official status, with Lord Shang or Wang Anshi. Kung-chuan Hsiao in his monumental work on Kang compared him with Wang Anshi in several instances (1975:25, 42, 273, 405). Moreover, the contemporary Miao Quansun (1844–1919), a Hanlin compiler, observed in a letter dated August 1898: “Recently new policies have been repeatedly decreed. Mr. Kang [Youwei]’s ambition is being expressed, much like the majesty of Wang Anshi and Zhang Juzheng. It is truly extraordinary that the Emperor has been so willing to follow Kang’s advice” (Wang 1986, 3:3060). In 1901, Zhang Binglin (1869–1936), when jokingly comparing prominent contemporary politicians to *Dream of the Red Chamber* figures, referred Guangxu and Kang to Jia Baoyu and Lin Daiyu, the leading lovers in the novel (Sun Baoxun 1983, 1:372). Thus, it seems unmistakable that knowledgeable contemporaries have confirmed Kang’s close relationship with the Emperor.

Historians can quote contemporary sources, but also must put events into context and perspective. I have concluded that Weng Tonghe “was clearly impressed by Kang,” and recommended Kang to the Emperor; however, Weng’s impressions were not all favorable, but curiously mixed, with Weng referring to Kang as a “wild fox” in his diary. “Copies of Kang’s memorial were widely circulated among interested officials” because Kang was an active communicator. In those days, “copying manuscripts” (*chuanchao*) before sending for block or lithographic printing was a common practice. Manuscripts of Feng Guiden’s famous book, for example, had been circulated for about a decade before formal publication. We know without question that Kang’s first four memorials to the Emperor were formally published for the first time in the autumn of 1896. Later, the first five memorials were published and sold by the *Shiwu bao* (Wang 1986, 2:1842; 4:3458). Baoguo hui (Society to protect the nation) was launched in an atmosphere of acute crisis in the wake of the humiliating capitulation to the demands of major imperialist powers for leaseholds. Hence we should not be surprised that Kang’s and Liang’s highly passionate and patriotic remarks made at the meetings moved the audience to tears. While we should use all sources carefully, to discredit Kang-Liang sources entirely is a “conviction,” to use Kwong’s own term, not a “solid methodology.” How excessive it is when Kwong regards Kang’s draft memorials “largely apocryphal” (1984:232)! I have proved in my article, with the help of archival evidence, that many of Kang’s statements in his Chronological Biography are truthful.

Kwong cites two “misinformations” to discredit my work, the identities of Li Duanfen and Jiang Biao, but I really missed neither. I identified Li as Liang’s “brother-in-law” because Li married his girl cousin to Liang, and Jiang as a reformer from Hunan because, before he accepted a position in Beijing in 1898, he had been active as a reformer in Hunan, even though I knew he was a native of Jiangsu province. Ironically, “misinformations” are easy to find in Kwong’s rejoinder. Besides his misinformed interpretation of the “Society for self-strengthening studies” (*Qiangxue hui*) and his caricature of my work, he writes that Kang emerged to be “a notable scholar-celebrity in 1898.” In fact, Kang was already a scholar-celebrity four or more years earlier when he led the candidates’ petition and when his controversial books on Confucianism were in print.

Last, but not least, we must not obscure the central issue of this debate: how important was Kang in 1898? Kwong considers him peripheral, but I do not agree. When I say Kang played a central role in the reform of 1898, I do not mean he “masterminded” the event; nobody said so. There is no doubt that other reformers, Sun Jianai, Zhang Zhidong, Feng Guifen, and Yuan Chang, etc. had contributed more or less to the reforms. But if Kang were peripheral, of about fifty identifiable

reformers in 1898, particularly in the realm of ideas, who appears more central than Kang besides the reform-minded Guangxu Emperor? My article recognizes Guangxu's active role (1992:539–40), in addition to my erstwhile study of the Emperor's significant role in the reform (1972). Hence Kwong's hyperbolic statement at the end of his rejoinder is patently "inept and farfetched."

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