

**SUIYUAN STUDENTS STUDYING IN JAPAN AND THEIR CONTRIBUTION  
TO LOCAL CULTURAL AND EDUCATIONAL UNDERTAKINGS IN MODERN  
TIMES, 1905-1933**

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**Abstract:** The Opium War, which broke out in 1840, opened the door of ancient China and also ushered the modernization of China unexpectedly. Many intelligent people had recognized the importance and urgency of studying advanced countries' science, technology as well as cultivating new talents actively. Saving the national crises became the theme of this period, some farsighted Chinese bravely faced the tragic reality and began to study abroad and got to know the world again. In order to acquire progressive knowledge more directly, the Chinese government at that time had sent overseas students to European and American countries since the 1870s with remarkable results. In the year of 1896, the Qing government dispatched 13 students to study in Japan. This was of great significance as it was the first time for Chinese students to study in Japan officially.

Suiyuan region in the north began to dispatch students to Japan in 1905, although it started late, it was developing continuously. Many Suiyuan students left the homeland and wrote a magnificent chapter to pursue the ideal of national salvation with patriotism and fearless spirit of exploration, which greatly promoted the modernization process of Suiyuan. Based on rich historical facts and original materials, this article takes Suiyuan students studying in Japan from 1905 to 1933 as the research object, discusses their contributions to promoting regional development, and observes the profound impact of movement of studying in Japan on the process of Chinese history.

**Key words:** Modern Times; Suiyuan Region; Suiyuan Students Studying in Japan; Cultural and Educational Undertakings.

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### **Introduction**

Studying abroad means that a person goes abroad to learn knowledge and receive various kinds of education under the premise of complying with applicable regulations. Depending on different sources of funds and learning time, there are government-funded and self-funded students, short-term study and long-term study, people who study in other countries are called "overseas students". Studying abroad is an effective way to increase the cultural exchanges. It is also a momentous bridge to enhance communication between countries, which have a far-reaching influence on the future and destiny of modern China. Among them, Chinese students studying in Japan are a picturesque scenery.

A famous Japanese scholar, Sanetou Keishuu, recorded in History of Chinese Studying in Japan: "From the first dispatch of Chinese students to Japan in 1896 to the outbreak of War of

Resistance against Japan in 1937, the total number of Chinese students studying in Japan was not less than 50,000 in 42 years, which was an unprecedented campaign in China history.” [1] This huge group had a profound influence on the modern China. From 1905 to 1933, more than 80 Suiyuan students went to Japan to learn advanced science, technology, ideology and culture. After coming back to China, they built hometown with sincerity. Therefore, it is extremely important to research education cause of Suiyuan students studying in Japan.

### **Literature Review**

The research of Chinese students studying abroad originated in the late Qing Dynasty, and developed gradually from the May Fourth Movement in the 1920s. Later, the relevant research was stagnated by long-term war and regime change from the 1930s to the late 1970s. Since the 1980s, the research on the history of studying abroad in China has continued to expand and deepen, and a large number of high-level works and related achievements have emerged, various categories and key points have also been refined further as well as research capabilities has been continuously improved.

Research on Chinese studying in Japan is fruitful and has different types of emphasis. History of Chinese Studying in Japan wrote by famous Japanese scholar Sanetou Keishuu in 1983, is known as one of the most classic work in this field. This book is characterized by concise language, rich content and powerful argument, which uses different kinds of historical materials to discuss the causes and development of the movement of Chinese studying in Japan from 1896 to 1937 in detail, as well as their abundant activities and the momentous impact on China.

Li Xisho’s article “Research on the Number of Chinese Students Studying in Japan in the Late Qing Dynasty” (1982), Jin Mingquan’s book Research on Chinese Scholars Studying in Japan in the Early 20th century (1995), Shen Diancheng’s book The Centennial History of Chinese Studying in Japan, 1896-1996 (1997), Shang Xiaoming’s Chinese Students Studying in Japan and the New Policy in the Late Qing Dynasty (2003), Liu Gongjun’s article “The Financing and Management of Funds for Students Studying in Japan in the Qing Dynasty” (2007), Overseas Students and the Revolution of 1911, edited by China Overseas Students Association in 2012, Jia Linyu’s article “ Sino-Japanese Cultural Communication and Influence in the Late Qing Dynasty” (2012), Luo Xiaoying’s article “The History of Chinese Students Studying in Japan in the Late Qing Dynasty and the Early Republic of China ” (2013), Dairi hochu, Sun Anshi’s New Trends in the History of Chinese and Japanese Overseas Students in Modern Times (2014), Wan Jianlan’s article “The Analysis of Historical Status of Students Studying in Japan in the Late Qing Dynasty and Early Republic of China” (2014), Yang Xiao and Yang Yang’s book The Survey of Modern Japanese Ethnic Education (2015), Shi Peilei’s book Research on Historical Records of Japan in Ming and Qing Dynasties (2016), Yan Ansheng’s A spiritual History of Modern Chinese Studying in Japan (2018), Xu Zhimin’s Study Abroad, War and Aftermath: Research on the History of Modern Sino-Japanese Relations (2020) and so on. Based on historical materials, these monographs and articles elucidated and explored all or part of Chinese policies about students studying in Japan, including financial subsidies, supervision and management, different aspects of communication between China and Japan,etc., all of these have an important academic value.

At present, there are no special research achievements on the education cause of Suiyuan students studying in Japan in modern times, only a few of books and articles involve some relevant contents more or less. For example, the History of Education in Inner Mongolia compiled by Committee of Inner Mongolia Education Annals in 1995, The Social Changes in

Modern Suiyuan Area (2001) wrote by Niu Jingzhong, General Records of Suiyuan compiled by Suiyuan Tongzhi Guan in 2007, History of Inner Mongolia in the Republic of China wrote by Sai Hang in 2007, and General History of Inner Mongolia (2007) compiled by Cao Yongnian, Wang Mingliang's master degree article "A Study on Students Travel Outside of Suiyuan Area in the Republic of China 1912-1937" (2018), etc. The above works have certain reference value for writing this article.

This article takes Suiyuan overseas education in Japan in the period of 1905 to 1933 as the main research object, traces back particular historical background at that time, summarizes major reasons and characteristics of Suiyuan students studying in Japan, teases relevant policies and contents promulgated by both central government and Suiyuan local government, and deeply excavates significant contributions made by Suiyuan students after they came back from Japan.

On one hand, this article puts forward the keys of the study, on the basis of a summary on the domestic and international achievement about the theme. At the same time, this article also consults scores of historical documents, mainly including local chronicles, such as General Records of Suiyuan, Suiyuan Chronicles of the Republic of China, Guangxu Suiyuan Draft, Guangxu Tumote Banner Draft and Inner Mongolia Education History Annals, etc. As well as published official books, atlases and other related books are also useful reference materials. On the other hand, according to the need of research, this article conducts targeted investigation from the perspective of history, political and geographical to realize the mutual verification of literature and fieldwork, and establishes the cornerstone of this research.

### **The Historical Background of Suiyuan Students Studying in Japan in Modern Times**

Suiyuan, situated in the central and western regions of Inner Mongolia, has traditionally been a place of competition between agricultural people in the Central Plains and nomadic people in the grasslands. In modern times, Suiyuan has also been the frontier of China's national defense, a barrier zone to defend the entire North China, it is "the lifeline of the entire nation" [2], which has a strategic position. Suiyuan region has a long history, and could be traced back to the Warring States Period more than 2,000 years ago. Soon after that many dynasties like Qin and Han had governed this area. In 1739, the Qing government set up the General's Office in Suiyuan city and began to establish an administrative system formally. In 1741, Suiyuan was under the jurisdiction of Shanxi. In 1914, Beiyang government separated Suiyuan Dao from Shanxi and merged with Xinghe Dao to create Suiyuan Special Administrative Region. In 1928, Nanjing National Government changed it into Suiyuan province, with Guisui (Hohhot) as its capital. Its jurisdiction included most of the present Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region of Bayan Nur city, Wuhai city, Hohhot city, Baotou city, Ordos city and Ulanqab city.

Suiyuan region is under a vast territory and complex terrain, with hills, plains and mountains interleaves with each other and Yellow River stretching for thousands of miles. Its northern part is the Mongolian Plateau, while the southern terrain is relatively gentle. There is Yin Mountain range across the whole area, which is a natural barrier. "It is bordered by Mongolia to the north, Xinjiang in the west, and Shaanxi, Gansu, Hebei, and Shanxi in the south" [3], which is a frontier fortress. Suiyuan is an enormous area with a sparse population, rich mineral resources, diverse crop varieties and developed animal husbandry. Since the Ming Dynasty, it had grown up to be an important place for border trade and transport, and was an "excellent area for immigrants" [4]. Therefore, the ethnic groups in this area were rather complicated, with Mongolian, Han and Hui people living in a mixed community.

The Han population was the largest, accounting for about six-tenths of the total population, mostly came from Shanxi, Hebei, Shandong, Shaanxi, Gansu and other provinces. The Mongolian population was in the middle, and the Hui people had the smallest population. All nationalities had different customs and unique characteristics. Historically, the establishment of Suiyuan was late, coupled with the location of distant border area, education here was relatively backward. However, since the educational reform was carried out in 1901 during the “New Deal”, Suiyuan region seized the opportunity, vigorously developed new-style education, and gradually established adequate modern schooling system. Among them, overseas education in Japan was particularly noteworthy.

Chinese students studying in Japan came into being under the complex and changeable historical background in modern times. Since the outbreak of the Opium War in 1840, China had been trapped in the quagmire of being divided up by imperialist countries, and had been forced to open its doors and sought effective ways to save the country and people. In order to learn advanced technology better and get rid of poverty and backwardness, the Qing government sent the first batch of young children to study in the United States in August 1872 with the unremitting efforts of Rong Hong, Zeng Guofan, Li Hongzhang and other important ministers of Westernization Movement, which “opened the precedent for Chinese studying abroad officially in modern times.”[5]

After was defeated in the Sino-Japanese War in 1895, China was compelled to sign the Treaty of Shimonoseki, which directly pushed the Chinese nation to the brink of extinction, but promoted the awakening of the whole nation further. Japan, which was also located in the east of Asia and seriously threatened by powerful enemies, had a small land and a population far lower than the Qing Dynasty, however, strengthened national strength rapidly since the Meiji Restoration. Accordingly, the people with insight in the Qing government had deeply realized “the significance of Meiji Restoration for China’s reformation”. [6]

As one of the prime ways to learn from Japan, the Qing government began to dispatch 13 students, including Tang Bao’e to study in Japan in 1896, and established a formalized system of sending students to study abroad in 1898 during Hundred Days’ Reform, other provinces and regions had also sent students to study in Japan. “This province’s students went abroad to study began in 1905”. [7] Suiyuan areas began to send overseas students to study in Japan in the same year, which opened a new page in the history.

### **Reasons and Characteristics of Suiyuan Students Studying in Japan in Modern Times**

It is universally known that sending students to study abroad is one of the best methods to be learned from foreign countries. As for the importance of studying abroad, Zhang Zhidong firmly believed that “going abroad for one year is better than reading western books for five years .....entering a foreign school one year is better than three years of Chinese schools” . [8]At the beginning of the 20th century, coping with a dangerous situation of domestic and external difficulties, students from Suiyuan went to Japan one after another in search of efficacious methods to save the whole country. Generally speaking, the reasons for Chinese studying in Japan were summarized seriously below.

First of all, the encouragement of the Qing government was the internal reason. A series of policies and measures advocated to study in Japan played a vital role in promoting the formation of an upsurge for Suiyuan students going to Japan. “Guimao school system” promulgated in 1904 had effectively boosted the development of overseas education in China, and also laid a

solid foundation for promoting overseas education in Suiyuan. 1905 was the line of demarcation between the old and new China. This year, the Qing government announced the abolition of the imperial examination system, which had existed in China for more than 1,300 years. This measure cutting off the access of traditional scholars to enter the official positions, and drove them to look for other ways.

In July of the same year, the Academic Affairs Office held the first examination for overseas graduates. Cao Rulin and others who had studied in Japan passed the examination and were appointed in different official positions. Since then, the Qing government held several examinations for overseas students and gave them honor on the basis of grades, which gave a huge temptation to those scholars who were looking forward to receiving an official career. “The policy encouragement and attraction of fame made studying in Japan was the best choice for young students at that time” [9], and so did Suiyuan students.

Secondly, the external reason was that “attracting Chinese students is a national policy of the Japanese government at that time”. [10] After 1895, there was a wave of studying Chinese affairs in Japan. From then on, Japanese government had tried its best to attract Chinese especially Suiyuan students to study in Japan in order to cultivate pro-Japanese elements and foster agents in Suiyuan, Chahar and northern Shanxi. As a senior Japanese official, Hiroshi Ueda emphasized: “We must regard the education of Chinese students in Japan as one of the major problems in our education sector.....These overseas students are a great force in the independence cause of China and Sino-Japanese cooperation, which is different from our students sent to Europe and the United States for academic research, so we must give them special protection and rewards.” [11] It could be seen that the Japanese government attached great importance to attract Chinese students at that time, no matter in the hope of strengthening Sino-Japanese communication or in order to realize the purpose of invading China.

Thirdly, objectively speaking, Zhang Zhidong and other prominent officials felt that there were many advantages for Chinese students went to Japan. Specifically, “Japan is close to China, the expense is cheaper than European and American countries. Moreover, Japanese is relatively simple for Chinese to understand, and customs between the two countries are similar and it is easy for the Chinese to adapt”. [12] In addition, Chinese people had a little psychological resistance to learning from western countries both ideologically and traditionally, while Japan not only preserved the essence of oriental culture, but also integrated advanced western culture. What’s more, Japan was a constitutional monarchy country, which was easy for Qing government to accept.

Besides above reasons, Suiyuan provincial government had also actively promoted the cause of studying abroad, paid much attention to modern education, and tried to revitalize regional cultural and educational undertakings. In the year of 1904, when Shanxi province selected overseas students, based on the convention, some outstanding talents of Suiyuan were given opportunity to study in Japan. They overcame a variety of difficulties and went to Japan with a fearless spirit, which was also a response to the call of the times in China at that era—to study abroad to save the country. Through careful analysis and found that Chinese students went to Japan to study had complicated social reasons, and Suiyuan overseas students in Japan not only had the general characteristics of Chinese overseas students, but also were restricted by regional political, economic, cultural and social conditions, and had their own uniqueness.

The start time was late and the population of Suiyuan students went to Japan was small. In 1896, the Qing government sent 13 students to Japan, which was the first time that for Chinese students

to go eastward. 1905 was a unique year, in which Chinese students studying in Japan “increased to more than 8000.” [13] In the year of 1906, the number was amounted to 123,000. Suiyuan is located in the frontier ethnic areas, with relatively backward economy, and the number of educated people was obviously lower than other provinces, its overseas education in Japan was also not advanced. It was not until 1905 that Suiyuan government began to dispatch government-funded and self-funded students to Japan, with a small number of male students. “Cao Shoupei, the chief executive of Guisui Dao, selected two government-funded students Gong Bingjun, Li Jingquan and several self-funded students including Liu Zhaorui, Li Maolin and Xie Kuiyuan to study in Japan.” [14] So it was clear that Suiyuan did not take the lead in the field of overseas education in the aspect of both individual pioneer and government operation, while many areas such as Zhili and Sichuan, had taken initial steps in China.

A substantial proportion of Suiyuan students chose accelerated education. Accelerated education referred that Chinese students went to Japan to enter a special school and studied hard in a major in a short time. After the Sino-Japanese War and the War of Aggression against China by the Eight Allied Forces, Chinese were anxious about the slow pace of modernization, and the whole country strongly advocated reform. That was, “it is a temporary emergency to cultivate practical talents in a short time on the basis of a changeable world.” [15] Accelerated education could train enough new applied talents for China in a short period of time, also promoted the progress of productive forces and brought a new atmosphere to society. However, it should be noted that accelerated education had some shortcomings undeniably.

Accelerated education was the major feature of Chinese students studying in Japan in the late Qing Dynasty, and Suiyuan area was no exception. From the time when Suiyuan students went to Japan and returned home, it was not difficult to find that quite a few people only made a short stay in Japan. For example, Gong Bingjun, Li Jingquan and Liu Zhaorui went to Japan in 1905 and returned to China in the same year. Li Maolin went to Japan in 1905 and returned home after graduation in 1906. Apart from all of these, other people were in a similar situation.

The experience of Suiyuan students in Japan was difficult, and the number of returned students was large. Suiyuan students faced huge practical difficulties from the moment they set foot in Japan. They were confronted with language problems, although there were many similarities between Chinese and Japanese words, they were still complicated and difficult to learn, which had caused serious inconvenience.

In the meantime, overseas students were in a state of extreme mental stress. Since the Sino-Japanese War broke out in 1894, Japanese sense of national superiority had been grown increasingly day by day, so that they reached “an extreme beyond their own endurance.”[16] With the influence of narrow nationalism, the Japanese extremely discriminated against and insulted Chinese people. These overseas students were originally distressed because their native land was trampled down by the foreign powers including Japan, not to mention being ridiculed severely in Japan, and their inner anguish was even more unspeakable. In the period of the Republic of China, Japan intensified its efforts to foster a pro-Japanese regime in China, impaired the integrity of Chinese territory and sovereignty, even adopted a naked policy of aggression. The conflict between China and Japan became more acute, and Japanese attitude towards Chinese overseas students became worse.

Against this background, most Suiyuan students and other Chinese had a burning desire for national revival. They deeply felt a strong responsibility and tried their best to study hard and take advantage of opportunities, meanwhile, they believed that the goal of studying in Japan was

not only to seek promotion for themselves, but also to closely linked their future with the fate of the whole country. After graduation, Suiyuan overseas students all returned to China and devoted themselves to the modernization construction of hometown with enthusiasm. Some people adhered to the cause of education, some established a number of enterprises, and others threw themselves into revolution.

### **Relevant Policies and Main Contents of Suiyuan Students Studying in Japan in Modern Times**

As modern history shows, China had been in a state of turmoil and different policies changed accordingly. In terms of overseas education policy, there had been no standardized and unified policy before the establishment of Ministry of Education in 1905. After 1905, a series of standardized policies for studying abroad had been promulgated one after another. Shortly afterwards, with the continuous progress of national strength, China's policy of studying abroad had been further improved.

Qualification and selection of overseas students. The qualification of overseas students refers to students abroad should meet the basic requirements including professional knowledge, educational background, language of foreign countries and other aspects. Originally, the Chinese government did not strictly require related qualifications. However, as the increase of the number of overseas students and the frequent exposure of many problems, the government began to strictly examine both qualifications and procedures of going abroad after 1916. Suiyuan students went to Japan were separated into government-funded and self-funded students. The government-funded overseas students were strictly selected by Department of Education in Suiyuan, and after the number of overseas students assigned, they were

offered monthly payment, including travel expenses, packing expenses and other fees. In principle, all expenses for self-funded students were supported by themselves.

Supervise management and incentive policies. In modern times, Chinese government's principal measures for the management of students studying in Japan were "combining restraint and encouragement, simultaneously giving control and reward"[17], Suiyuan government also followed this principle. While dispatching overseas students, it usually assigned special personnel to manage specific affairs. In 1906, the Ministry of Education formulated the Regulation on the Management of Chinese Students in Japan to enhance the management ability. The regulation stipulated: "The Overseas Students Supervision Office shall be set up in Japan as a settled organization to deal with different kinds of affairs. At the same time, it is necessary to appoint a principal supervisor and a deputy supervisor."[18] Soon after, all previous supervisors dispatched by each province were withdrew from Japan, and so was Suiyuan region.

The government of Republic of China selectively inherited overseas education management system of the previous regime. In January 1914, the Ministry of Education issued the Provisional Regulation on Affairs of Chinese Overseas Students in Japan, which stipulated that all the affairs of Chinese overseas students should be administered by full-time managers in accordance with the regulation. In December 1914, the Ministry of Education once again promulgated the Regulation on Affairs of Chinese Overseas Students in Japan to replace the interim regulation published in January at the beginning of the year. Regulation on Affairs of Overseas Students in Japan was the first integrated related regulation of the Republic of China. It not only inherited something of value from the late Qing Dynasty, but also innovated many precious contents which occupied a key position in the history. After that, the Ministry of Education adjusted many

rules in light of the changing reality. Suiyuan government sent students to Japan in strict accordance with central policies. Typical representatives including Yan Jiao, He Yunzhang, Chen Gang and other talents.

Suiyuan government not only set accurate demands on overseas students in Japan, but also gave them subsidies according to actual situation. In 1921, Third Session of Suiyuan Education Administration Conference was held, and decided to increase two quotas of overseas students in Japan, and supplied 400 yuan for each person every year. In 1924, Suiyuan region promulgated Regulations on Handling Subsidies for Overseas Students, stipulating that only those who satisfied requirements of “graduates from universities or specialized schools” [19], and who passed the test of Ministry of Education, could receive government subsidies.

Since 1927, there had been famine in Suiyuan year after year. Local fiscal revenue had been sharply reduced, even though the allowance for overseas students could not be paid on time. In response, during Pan Xiuren’s tenure as the director of Suiyuan Education Department in 1931, he proposed that “the focal point of cultivating talents is to reward in a reasonable way.”[20] Under the consent of the provincial government, provincial Education Department was entrusted to increase special funds, giving priority to subsidize talents in agriculture, industry, science and medicine, and allocating 2,000 yuan to students studying in Japan each year.

In 1931, Suiyuan province issued a new regulation, which increased 5 overseas students in Japan on the original basis, and then added one quota every year until the full amount was reached, still giving priority to four subjects of agriculture, engineering, science and medicine sequentially. The qualification for recommendation of overseas students was changed—graduates from national, provincial or registered private schools with a bachelor’s degree and more than two years of social service was eligible. Each student studying in Japan would be offered 300 yuan for baggage fee, 250 yuan for traveling expenses, 70 yen for monthly allowance.

The examination and appointment of students who had studied in Japan were another important part of overseas education. When the imperial examination system was abolished in 1905, it was the time for Qing government to select and hire talents through other channels. Hence, the Qing government held several examinations for returned overseas students to select and appoint them. Since then, the Qing government had successively formulated regulations, such as Regulation for Testing Graduates and Regulation on Testing Overseas Graduates in All Provinces and other regulations to standardize the process of appointment and selection.

As Regulation for Testing Graduates stipulated: “the examination is divided into two sessions, and the first examination is based on the majors of graduates studies, the latter examination included both Chinese and foreign languages.”[21] There were three questions in each subject in the first examination, and in the second part, there were a Chinese question and a foreign language question. It was obvious that although the examination was slightly rough, this was an operable way to test the true level of overseas students basically. The Republic of China put an emphasis on the selection and appointment of overseas students too.

Suiyuan region also laid stress on the assessment of overseas, which was mainly based on the performance of students’ examination scores, professional knowledge, academic qualifications and daily performance, etc. For example, Liu Zhaorui, who graduated from Tokyo Police Academy, passed the examination and successively served as a member of Shanxi Provincial Police Department, the deputy supervisor of the Saibei Pass, and the director of the Suiyuan

Police Department. Li Xianrui, who graduated from Tokyo Guard University, served as the staff officer of the Jinsui General Headquarters.

### **Contribution of Suiyuan Students Studying in Japan to Local Cultural and Educational Undertakings in Modern Times**

Movement of studying in Japan had a positive impact on the modernization process of China and promoted the aspect of political, economic, cultural, scientific, educational and military of China. Suiyuan students studying in Japan were a group at the forefront of the times, whom were filled with sincerity and addicted to constructing Suiyuan region.

Taking an active part in revolutionary activities. In 1912, the establishment of Republic of China and the collapse of Qing Dynasty marked the birth of bourgeois republic and the end of feudal monarchy that had lasted more than two thousand years in China. This radical change had epoch-making significance and opened a new era in Chinese history. From then on, “the modern intellectual group represented by overseas students has stepped into the stage of Chinese history in the 20th century.” [22]

Chinese students studying in Japan were the pillars of social change in China. In 1905, Sun Yat-sen set up a new bourgeois political party in Tokyo, that was Chinese Revolutionary League. Its establishment, development and expansion were inseparable from the efforts of Chinese students studying in Japan. “There are 379 members of the Chinese Revolutionary League, 354 of them are students, and most of whom are overseas students.”[23] In addition to studying hard, these overseas students actively participated in various activities, also had extensive contacted with Japanese society, and were deeply influenced by the trends of democracy and republicanism. They founded and publicized progressive books and newspapers to promote the widespread dissemination of democratic revolutionary ideas, and became the dominating force in the revolution.

Under the circumstances, a great many students studying in Japan resolutely devoted themselves to the revolution, and became pioneers of Chinese bourgeois revolutionaries as well as the Revolution of 1911. Suiyuan people, such as Gong Bingjun, Li Jingquan, Liu Zhaorui and Li Maolin were part of them. Whenever they thought of tragic scenes that motherland was invaded by foreign powers and people were under the dark rule of the Qing government, they were eager to change the reality and participated in the revolution became stronger and stronger. Gong Bingjun, Li Jingquan, Liu Zhaorui and Li Maolin joined the Chinese Revolutionary League and became the first group of members in 1905. In the guidance of Sun Yat sen’s revolutionary strategy of “overthrowing the Qing government, and giving back our sovereignty”, they returned to China to carry out groundbreaking work and publicized Sun Yat sen’s Three People’s Principles.

In 1912, Gong Bingjun, who had studied in Japan, became the first governor of Tokoto County in Suiyuan region. As soon as he took office, he adopted many effective measures such as set up a modern school and several factories, propagated democratic ideas, and issued a strict smoking ban to rectify the local social customs. Li Jingquan positively advertised advanced revolutionary thoughts after coming back from Japan. He served successively as a teacher of Taiyuan Middle School and a member of Taiyuan Institute of Academic Affairs. He also took part in the preparation of Shanxi Provincial Consultation Bureau and was elected as a counselor. Afterwards, he served successively as governor of Salazi and contributed greatly to the cultivation of regional talents and the dissemination of revolutionary ideas.

After graduating from Tokyo Police Academy, Liu Zhaorui concentrated on the revolutionary cause. He had actively supported Yan Xishan's Shanxi revolutionary army. When Yan Xishan became the commander of Shanxi Military Government in 1911, he appointed Liu Zhaorui as the tax supervisor of Suiyuan Saibei Pass and the director of Suiyuan Police Department. Liu Zhaorui worked out detailed solutions to prominent problems about tax and police affairs in Suiyuan region. Meanwhile he committed himself to improving administrative efficiency, which was widely praised by local people.

Vigorously cultivated modern talents and developed new education. It is universally known that the prosperity of a country depends on a lot of creative talents, and talents are the backbone of a country. In view of Suiyuan students studying in Japan, there were many disadvantages in the late Qing Dynasty's education system. For one thing, old-style education attached importance to words and phrases which imprisoned people's thoughts seriously divorced from reality. For another, it hindered the development of science, and ran counter to the trend of times. Therefore, it was necessary to break the old shackles and cultivate talents with excellent professional skills who could apply what they had learned.

He Yunzhang studied in the Textile Department of Tokyo Institute of Technology in 1925, and was skilled in textile technology and management knowledge. After returning to China, he was employed as a technician of Commerce and Industry of the Republic of China government, and then served as deputy director of Suiyuan Wool Weaving Factory. In his tenure, he was fully aware of the significance of specialized technical personnel and mechanical equipment for a factory, and had vigorously introduced several technicians and a group of skilled workers who were familiar with the textile industry. He also held textile training classes to teach employees basic professional knowledge, exercised their practical skills, and cultivated numerous practical talents. At that time, Suiyuan area was rich in fur production, and could produce more than 10,000 thick blankets and over 10,000 yards of coarse wool every year. These products not only satisfied demand for local need, but also were popular with consumers in Beijing, Tianjin, Gansu and other places. Consequently, He Yunzhang was also known as "one of the principal founders of machine wool textile industry in western Inner Mongolia." [24]

Education is indispensable for cultivating talents, and talents can only be fully developed by investing education. Together with other students studying in Japan, Gong Bingjun founded a compulsory primary school in Guisui County, his hometown, which enrolled poor children for free admission. Apart from teaching primary school students to read and write, the school also offered new courses such as music, painting and handwork lessons, which released children's nature reasonably, developed their intelligence as well as enabled them to foster good behavior habits by free and harmonious atmosphere, laying a firm foundation for learning advanced science and arts knowledge in the future.

Later, when Gong Bingjun was an inspector in Shanxi province, he was responsible for inspecting school affairs of the whole province, especially Suiyuan region, and devoted himself to promoting the new-style education. In 1908, after inspecting two primary schools in Guisui, he praised: "Students are serious about learning foreign languages, physics, chemical arithmetic and other disciplines in a state of high spirits." It was clear that Suiyuan students studying in Japan were enthusiastic about education and spared no efforts to build hometown.

Suiyuan students studying in Japan actively contacted and absorbed progressive ideas of freedom, democracy and equality in Japan, and spread these ideas by multifarious channels after returning home. Li Maolin, one of the representatives, zealously propagandized revolutionary ideas on

diverse occasions, and practiced them personally. Every time when folk organizations performing opera, he took the chance before the play began to make a speech on the stage to spread revolutionary ideas and new things he heard and saw in Japan. At the same time, he also energetically set up female schools to promote women liberation movement. These actions played a positive role in opening up the atmosphere at that time.

### **Conclusion**

The modern history of China is not just a history of humiliation, but also a history of struggle and exploration. At that time, China's productivity was backward, and the government was corrupt and incompetent. What was worse, Chinese were suffering from imperialist aggression. Therefore, saving the nation **from doom** became the driving force for Chinese struggle tenaciously. Under this unique background, Chinese students studying in Japan had the dream of saving the country. They overcame different kinds of difficulties went to Japan to learn advanced science, technology, ideology and culture. Movement of studying in Japan became a glorious chapter in the modern history of China, which had a far-reaching impact on the future and destiny of the Chinese nation.

Despite Suiyuan was located on the frontier area, its economy was relatively backward, and overseas education in Japan started late. However, the more backward the area was, the more advanced knowledge was needed. In the early 20th century, Suiyuan students went to Japan to study hard who returned to hometown consciously shouldered the mission entrusted by the time. They courageously participated in the revolution of liberating motherland and people, and spread the ideas of democracy and progress zealously which greatly broaden the minds of the masses. In the meantime, they also vigorously set up new-style education, and cultivated a large number of talents. In a word, they had been in the vanguard of social change in Suiyuan region.

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