By the early twentieth century the de facto partition of China was proceeding relentlessly as the major powers grabbed its land or laid claim to exclusive territorial spheres of influence. Britain was consolidating its base in Guangdong, the Yangzi River area, and Tibet. France took Guangxi, Yunnan, and Hainan, while Germany asserted control over Liaodong. Japan, already in occupation of Taiwan, was now intensifying its economic penetration of central China as well as its coastal regions. The United States took the advantage of the “open door” policy to compete with earlier comers. Under cover of the allied army’s invasion of Peking during the Boxer Rebellion in 1900, Russia occupied the northeastern provinces (Manchuria), and then refused to withdraw. This caused the great “Ju E” (Resistance against Russia) protest movement in China, especially among students.1

The sense of crisis intensified when the Russo-Japanese War started within China, a theoretically sovereign state. Because of this as well as the surprising victory of Japan, the war shocked Chinese intellectuals. How was it possible for Japan, a small Asian country, to defeat Russia, a big European power? The answer to this question was vital if they were to understand how to go about strengthening their own obviously weakening nation. Through an analysis of Dongfang

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1 This explained why, when the Russo-Japanese War started, most of the Chinese stood on the side of Japan. One of the communist pioneers, Wu Yuzhang, described his experience of the Ju-E movement while in Japan as a student, recalling in his memoirs that “the movement was going on for a long time. After the Russo-Japanese War started in February 1904, people sympathized with Japan because of their hatred towards Tsarist Russia. When they heard of the Japanese victories, they were very happy. How naïve and ridiculous from today’s viewpoint! Both were imperialists and both enemies that invaded China.” Wu Yuzhang, Xinhai Geming [The 1911 Revolution] (Beijing, 1969), 55–59.
Zazhi (The Eastern Miscellany), a highly influential journal of international affairs at the time, this paper assesses the impact of the Russo-Japanese War on Chinese nationalism, a subject heretofore neglected by Chinese and Western scholarship. It will argue that Chinese nationalism of a new type emerged in this period, directly related to the war and the consequent ambivalence that developed toward Japan, China’s once weak and now strong neighbor.

Coverage of the War

The Eastern Miscellany was published by Shangwu Yingshu Guang (The Commercial Press) and was the most-read journal of international affairs in China in the early twentieth century. Founded by seven Chinese Christians in 1897, the Commercial Press played a very important role in the introduction of Western ideas to China through the publication of periodicals and books, including many translations of European works. Among their various journals, the most prominent was The Eastern Miscellany, which was first issued in 1904 and ceased publication in 1948—its forty-five-year uninterrupted

2 The materials used in this paper are mainly from the first three volumes of the journal (1904–1906), but it was published until 1948. In 1910 it became the largest journal in the country with a circulation of 15,000. Aside from editorials written by the journal’s staff, many important articles from other papers were also reprinted therein, making it an important source for contemporary intellectual trends in general.