

## *Original Paper*

# New Research Direction and Overview of the Crescent School in the Twenty-first Century

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### **Abstract**

*The Crescent School was a significant liberal intellectual organization in modern China during the 1920s and 1930s, greatly impacting the development of new Chinese literature and modern thought. This paper reviews the research conducted on the Crescent School in the twenty-first century, identifying an evident shortcoming of one-sided, superficial, and repetitive research due to disciplinary boundaries and a lack of theoretical framework. To address these limitations, this paper argues for the adoption of a new integrated perspective that combines literature, intellectual history, and histology, aimed at establishing the Crescent School's complete subjectivity. Furthermore, this paper explores the potential value of such an approach, which not only enriches the morphological samples of organizational studies but also expands the research view of organizations. In summary, this paper calls for a fresh look at the Crescent School and its impact on modern Chinese intellectual history, advocating for a more holistic approach to studying this organization and its contributions.*

### **Keywords**

*Crescent School, Chinese liberal intellectual organization, research direction, organizational study*

## **1. Introduction**

The Crescent School was a prominent liberal intellectual group in modern China, active in intellectual and cultural circles during the 1920s and 1930s. In 1924, the Indian poet Tagore, the first Asian recipient of the Nobel Literature Award, visited China, and the members of Zhimo Xu's "Dinner" - the original organizational form of the Crescent School - played a vital role in his reception and facilitating cultural exchanges. They celebrated Tagore's birthday in China and rehearsed his famous drama, *Chitra*.

Tagore's visit provided an opportunity for the Crescent School to be formally established, marking the beginning of their active involvement in Chinese intellectual and cultural circles.

Most members of the Crescent School had studied in Europe and the United States, and upon their return to China, they served in universities and academic institutions. Additionally, they established modern media carriers such as newspapers, magazines, and bookstores to introduce and spread the achievements of Western civilization. Their goal was to transform traditional China, and they played a significant role in the development of the country's new literature and modern thought. The group's main representatives included Shi Hu, Zhimo Xu, Yiduo Wen, Shiqiu Liang, Longji Luo, and others (see Table 1).

**Table 1. Representative Persons of the Crescent School**

Education background	Occupation	Important social and cultural experience (As of 1933)	Participate in important events of the Crescent School (1924-1933)
Shi Hu (1891-1962) Domestic: Shanghai China Public School Overseas: Cornell University, New York State College of Agriculture; Cornell University College of Arts; Department of Philosophy, Columbia University PhD.	Professor of Beijing University; Principal of Chinese Public School; Professor of Guanghua University.	In September 1915, entered the Research Department of the Philosophy Department of Columbia University, became a disciple of Dewey and subscribed to Experimentalism for life. In January 1917, On Literary Reform was published in <i>New Youth magazine</i> , which opened the prelude to the literary revolution. In 1918, presided over the editor of <i>New Youth magazine</i> , published <i>Lifetime Events</i> , the first vernacular prose script in the history of new literature. In February 1920, <i>the Attempting Collection</i> was published, which was the first vernacular poetry collection in the early stage of Chinese new literature. In November 1919, he proposed Reorganizing the National Heritage, advocating to re-evaluate the value of all old cultures with a critical attitude and a scientific spirit. In May 1922, he founded <i>the Effort Weekly</i> to promote the political proposition of Good Government. On May 22, 1932, launched <i>Independent Review</i> .	In 1923, participated in the establishment of the Crescent Society; in April received Indian poet Tagore to China. In June 1927, founded the Crescent Bookstore. In March 1928, launched <i>the Crescent Monthly Magazine</i> . In 1929, founded Pingshe, an organization for discussion on politics, published <i>Human Rights and Covenants</i> in the <i>Crescent Monthly Magazine</i> , set off a vigorous Human Rights Movement. In 1931, elected as a council member of the China branch of the World PEN. In 1933, as one of the clean-up committees of the Crescent Bookstore, he was responsible for signing the transfer contract between the Crescent Bookstore and the Commercial Press.

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<p>Zhimo Xu (1897-1931)</p> <p>Domestic: Shanghai Baptist Preparatory Course of Law at Tianjin Beiyang University; Department of Political Science; Peking University Law School Overseas: Department of Sociology, Clark University; Master of Economics, Columbia University; School of Political Economy, London University; Graduate student of the Royal College of Cambridge University.</p>	<p>Professor of English Department of Peking University, Professor of Shanghai Guanghai University, Daxia University, Nanjing Central University, concurrently editor of Zhonghua Book Company, Professor of Peking Women's University.</p>	<p>In 1924, published Zhimo's Poems, a masterpiece of the early stage of Chinese new poetry, served as the translator and escort for Tagore.</p> <p>In 1930, elected as a member of the British Poetry Society.</p> <p>In 1931, elected as a council member of the China branch of the World PEN.</p>	<p>In 1923, established the predecessor of the Crescent Society, the Meal Party.</p> <p>In 1924, the Crescent Society performed the drama Chitra, with Xu Zhimo as one of the main actors, to celebrate Tagore's birthday in China.</p> <p>In October 1925, Charged one of the four supplements in China, <i>Morning Supplement</i>.</p> <p>In April 1926, founded <i>Poetry Magazine</i>, and became an important promoter of the movement of metricalization of new poetry.</p> <p>In June 1926, founded <i>Drama Magazine</i>, enthusiastically promoted the national drama movement.</p> <p>In June 1927, founded the Crescent Bookstore.</p> <p>In March 1928, launched the <i>Crescent Monthly Magazine</i>, and served as an editor.</p> <p>In February 1929, proposed to create an organization for discussion on politics of the Crescent School.</p> <p>In January 1931, founded <i>Poetry Magazine</i>.</p>
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Yiduo Wen (1899-1946) Domestic: Tsinghua School Overseas: The Art Institute of Chicago; Department of Fine Arts, University of Colorado; New York School of Art	Dean of Beijing Art College; Professor of Wu Song National Chengchi University ; Dean of the Department of Foreign Literature, Nanjing Central University; Dean of the School of Liberal Arts, Wuhan University; Dean of the School of Liberal Arts, Qingdao University; Professor of Tsinghua University	In 1924, initiated the establishment of the Dajiang Society among the students from Tsinghua School in the United States to promote nationalism. In early January 1925, participated in launching the Chinese Drama Improvement Society. In September 1925, participated in the reconstruction of the Beijing Art College, with the support of his colleagues from the Crescent Society. In December 1925, participated in the establishment of the Beijing Nationalist Group Federation. In 1928, starting from the study of Du Fu ,his interest changed from writing new poems to studying ancient Chinese literature.	In August 1925, joined the Crescent Society, actively promoted the national drama reform movement. In April 1926, founded <i>Poetry Magazine</i> , and became a pioneer of the movement of metricalization of new poetry. In June 1926, drafted <i>Drama Magazine</i> . In June 1927, founded the Crescent Bookstore. In March 1928, launched <i>the Crescent Monthly Magazine</i> , and served as an editor.
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<p>Shiqiu Liang (1903-1987)</p> <p>Domestic: Tsinghua University, Jinan School</p> <p>Overseas: Studied English and American Literature at Colorado University; Master of Arts at Harvard University</p>	<p>Professor of Southeast University, Chinese Public School; Dean and Professor of the Foreign Languages Department of Qingdao University and Director of the Library</p>	<p>In 1924, organized the Dajiang Club with his Tsinghua classmates Luo Longji, Wen Yiduo, Pan Guangdan and others in Chicago to promote cultural nationalism.</p> <p>In the autumn of 1924, studied under Babbitt and followed his Humanistic Ideas.</p> <p>In January 1925, together with Xiong Fuxi, Wen Yiduo, Zhao Taiquan, Yu Shangyuan, etc., organized and established the Chinese Drama Improvement Society in New York, USA, explored the way to improve traditional Chinese drama.</p> <p>In 1927, edited News of Current Affairs Supplement, Qing Guang, published more than 100 essays under the pseudonym of Qiu Lang, forming a unique prose style.</p> <p>In 1928, as one of the main contributors of the secret publication New Road, that founded by the modern new Confucian Zhang Junmai and the Chinese Youth Party leader Li Huang, advocating nationalism, democratic politics and national culture.</p> <p>In June 1931, elected as a member of the translation committee of the Complete Works of Shakespeare by the China Education and Culture Foundation, and translated the complete works of Shakespeare with one person.</p> <p>In October 1931, as a member of the Rebirth Club in Peking, which established by Zhang Junmai, Zhang Dongsun and others.</p>	<p>In March 1926, published Romantic Trends in Modern Chinese Literature in <i>Morning Supplement</i> to promote his cultural conservatism in literary criticism.</p> <p>In June 1926, became one of the important contributors of <i>Morning Supplement</i>.</p> <p>In June 1927, participated in the establishment of the Crescent Bookstore.</p> <p>In March 1928, participated in the establishment of <i>the Crescent Monthly Magazine</i>.</p> <p>In the spring of 1929, participated in Pingshe, a political discussion organization among the Crescent School.</p> <p>In June 1929, published On the Unity of Thought in <i>Crescent Monthly Magazine</i>, criticizing the Kuomintang's ideological and cultural despotism.</p> <p>In 1929, joined the Chinese Youth Party and taught in for the Chinese Youth Party's training school, Zhixing Academy for free.</p>
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Longji Luo (1898-1965)  Domestic:  School  Overseas:  master's degree from  Kongswiecin University in  the United States, and a  doctorate in philosophy  from Columbia University,  entered the School of  Economics and Political  Science, University of  London	Dean of the  Department of  Tsinghua Politics, Guanghua  University; Dean and  Professor of the  Department of  Political Economy of  China Public Schools,  Lecturer of the  Department of  Political Economy of  Jinan University  In 1931, after the September 18th Incident, gave	In 1924, organized the Dajiang Club with his  Tsinghua classmates in Chicago to promote cultural  nationalism.  In 1925, entered the School of Economics and  Political Science, London University, and became a  disciple of the famous Fabian theorist Harold  Laski.  In November 1930, was arrested and imprisoned  for publishing a series of articles fighting for  democracy, freedom, and human rights in the  Crescent Monthly Maganize, which repeatedly  violated the KMT authorities.  In 1931, after the September 18th Incident, gave  public speeches at various universities in Shanghai,  advocating armed resistance against Japan.	In 1928, after returning to China, participated in  the activities of the Crescent School, and  subsequently participated in the editorial affairs  of <i>the Crescent Monthly Maganize</i> .  In April 1929, proposed the establishment of a  Pingshe within the Crescent Group to discuss  political and social issues and became an active  member.  In 1929, became a pioneer in the Human Rights  Movement against the one-party dictatorship of  the Kuomintang launched by <i>the Crescent          Monthly Maganize</i> and was a famous  representative of the human rights faction.
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The Crescent School has left a unique mark in the long scroll of new literature and modern thought development, showcasing rich multi-diverse and personal active cultural values. Research related to the Crescent School has undergone a complex process, from mixed reviews to misunderstandings, and finally, an increase in rational objectivity. The group garnered attention from scholars during its presence from 1923 to 1933. Many scholars, such as Chen (1930), Wang (1933), Zhao (1932), and Zhu (1993), investigated the group's cultural activities and literary achievements. Famous figures from Chinese intellectual and cultural circles, such as Zuoren Zhou, Dafu Yu, and Shen Hong, affirmed the literary activities of the Crescent School, including prose, poetry, and drama (Zhao, 1935). These findings verify that the Crescent School was an important group in intellectual and cultural circles, especially for their achievements in new poems and drama, which were recognized by mainstream cultural circles. However, criticism from the left-wing cultural camp cannot be ignored. Left-wing critics, such as Kang Peng (Fang, 1993), used Marxist dialectical materialism and class analysis methods as weapons, vehemently attacking the Crescent School. In 1939, Helin Li proposed two articles, the Crescent's Attitude, Literature and Revolution, which were seen as a battle declaration of the Crescent School for revolutionary literature, and the group was regarded as a real enemy (Li, 1938). This view significantly impacted research on the Crescent School, leading to the group being labelled a reactionary political and cultural force after the foundation of the People's Republic of China. The group became the object of political criticism, and academic research on the Crescent School was limited to revolutionary criticism, with derogatory labels, such as "bourgeois cultural spokesman" and "vanguard of Kuomintang culture." However, with the launch of the nationwide discussion on the Standard of Truth in 1978, a new trend of "New Enlightenment" emerged in the academic circle,

promoting people's liberation of mind. Scholars gradually broke free from the constraints of political ideology, adopting a rational academic research approach with a historicist viewpoint and an objective spirit of seeking truth from facts. In 1980, the first academic Symposium of Modern Chinese Literature Research Association was held to restore the original features of modern literature and improve research levels. Issues related to the Crescent School became hot topics. Scholars tried to break free from the previous single research model dominated by political criticism and conducted objective and in-depth academic understanding and value exploration. In the increasingly relaxed academic environment, the research on the Crescent School in the 1980s and 1990s had a new outlook. Shoutong Zhu (1995) placed the Crescent School's collective cultural form in the perspective of "Gentleman's Style," revealing that the Crescent School's gentleman culture played a vital role in healthy cultural development. Zhu reflected calmly that the group had been misread for a long time due to an overemphasis on the method of "revolutionary criticism and social evolution" in previous studies. In summary, the efforts and explorations of scholars in this period laid a solid foundation for the Crescent School's return to ordinary academic research.

In the twenty-first century, research on the Crescent School has entered a new stage, characterized by diversified perspectives, deepening trends, and an expanding scope. However, the academic community has not yet effectively combed and discussed its research. In recent years, scholars have examined the Crescent School from varied angles based on their respective academic backgrounds, reflecting their values. Unfortunately, the research has been characterized by one-dimensionality imposed by disciplinary boundaries, as well as a serious lack of in-depth holistic study, resulting in the phenomena of fragmentation, superficiality, and duplication. After decades of research, it is time for the academic community to break the stereotypes of unidirectional research by returning to the historical stage on which the Crescent School depends and to its main achievements. To establish the Crescent School's own complete subjectivity, we should adopt a new integrated perspective that combines literature, political thought, and relevant historical theories. This approach to integrated research will also promote the diversity of organizational study from the perspective of non-Western regions and historical examples.

## **2. Research Progress on the Crescent School since the Twenty-first Century**

Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, research on the Crescent School has entered a new stage, showing diversified perspectives, deepening trends, and expanding scope. The study of the Crescent School has shed the restrictions of political ideology, moving away from a single mode of political criticism that focused mainly on "class analysis" and "political qualitative," and instead focusing more on the object's inherent value, with greater attention to aesthetics. Scholars from various fields, including literature, history, art, journalism, political science, law, and translation, have joined in to study the Crescent School from different perspectives. This multi-dimensional exploration has laid a solid foundation for the overall understanding of the Crescent School. However, this approach has also

presented some drawbacks, and as a result, current research is divided into sections based on the aforementioned topics.

### 2.1 *The Formation and Development of the Crescent School*

The Crescent School lasted for a decade, and many important historical facts about it remained unclear, prompting researchers to clarify them. Research on the formation and development of the Crescent School focused on three main aspects.

Firstly, it evaluated the Crescent School's developmental process and personnel changes. Qun Liu (2011) attempted to construct the concept of the Crescent Society, connecting the group activities of both Beijing and Shanghai, including the rise of the Crescent Club, the activities of *the Morning Supplement*, the operation of the Crescent Bookstore, the activities of *the Crescent Monthly Magazine*, *the Poetry Journal*, and Selected Poems. Liu's work neglected the Crescent School's text creation and ideas, which he later revised in his latest monograph of the Crescent School in China, titled *Crescent Society's Cultural Strategies*. Liu (2018) analyzed the group's cultural strategies, such as translation, teaching, and political discussions, and used French sociologist Bourdieu's concepts to observe the Crescent School's involvement in the cultural activities of the Shanghai publishing field. However, Liu's views did not explore these aspects in-depth, merely mentioning them in the introduction. The collective and intensive translation of Western political thought, such as the British political thinker Laski's works, was an obvious omission. This flaw in the overall investigation of the cultural strategy of the Crescent School hinders readers from fully understanding the intellectual and cultural values of the group.

Secondly, special research was conducted on the historical events involved in the evolution of the Crescent School. The loose organizational structure and lack of relevant historical material made the basic historical facts of the Crescent School unclear. Different researchers attempted to clarify the basic historical facts of the Crescent School. Xiangxi Fu's (2015) research drew from detailed historical materials to construct and present opinions on the longstanding, vague series of controversial issues in academia. Fu explored the Crescent Society, the Crescent Poetry School, and the Crescent School separately to clarify their respective time and connotation. The researchers placed the development of the Crescent Poetic School above that of the Crescent School itself and even considered the formation of the Crescent Poetic School as the beginning of the Crescent School, which may be significant for affirming the School's literary value, but are contrary to the facts. The political group, which included Shi Hu and others, was not analyzed, and the study placed the Crescent School under the lens of literary history, subjectively ignoring its political discussion.

Finally, the publishing and media organizations supported by the Crescent School have become the focus of researchers, namely *the Morning Supplement*, *the Crescent Monthly Magazine*, *Poetry Journal*, and the Crescent Bookstore. Research focused mainly on *the Crescent Monthly Magazine*, which was the most important journal of the Crescent School. Qingsong Jiang (2007) conducted a comprehensive study of *the Crescent Monthly Magazine's* establishment, personnel, and content, clarifying its



contribution to the development of modern Chinese literature. Research on *the Morning Supplement* and the Crescent Bookstore has yet to be studied in-depth.

### 2.2 *The Crescent School's Literary Creation and Thought*

The perspective of literary research was still mainly across the academic community. From the current researcher's knowledge background, the focus on Chinese modern and contemporary literature accounted for the majority of studies. The Crescent School, as one of the three major societies in the history of Chinese New Literature (the other two being the Literary Research Society and the Creation Society), had always been a keen object for literary researchers. The perspective of literary research, which was both overall and partial, included mainly the specific literary practice and ideas of the Crescent School.

The representative overall research, such as Bo Hu (2001) constructed the literary thought system of the Crescent School from the three aspects of poetry, drama, and literary criticism, considering it a comprehensive cultural school with a tendency toward Classicism, proposed that the Crescent School was a holistic group of writers, whose contributions to all aspects of culture (metrical Poetics, national drama theory, new humanistic criticism, and human rights concepts) can be regarded as cultural choices based on Classicism—a profound embodiment of the attitude toward their times and lives as influenced by the cultural choice of Classicism itself, instead of a pure literary concept or political attitude. Hongchun Huang (2015) comprehensively illustrated the basic literary views and performance of various styles, through a comprehensive look at the historical context generated by the Crescent School and the developmental stages of its literary concept, argued that the Crescent School had liberalism at its core—in both its Classical and Romantic literary aesthetic styles. Simiao Sun (2018) proposed that the Crescent School organically adopted and reconstructed Western literary thoughts and, on this basis, it integrated Chinese traditional culture to establish a literary thought system centered around sound individualism. Sun used individualism to dominate the Crescent School's literary thought, trying to communicate its two important aspects of the literary and political, yet inevitably appearing rather one-sided. Researchers also focused on partial research from various literary categories.

First, poetry, reflecting the best style of the Crescent School and having made the greatest achievements, became priority in research. For example, Hong Ye (2016) discussed the reasons for the formation and trend of the Crescent poetic thought in-depth by focusing on four major aspects of poetic philosophy, specifically listed as following: the Crescent Group symbiosis with the Media; the Crescent poet's anti-priority strategy; culture identity of the Crescent poetry and the Crescent poetics trend. The study did not intend to make a comprehensive investigation of the formation and development of the Crescent Poetics School, nor did conduct excessive analysis of its poetic ideas and creation; rather, took a perspective that was not limited to the literary phenomenon itself. What's more, it presented a new approach by starting an organic dialogue in the context of history and culture and conducting a cultural investigation of the Crescent poetry within a broader field. With the emphasis on exploring the reasons for the generation of the Crescent Poetry School's poetic thought, Ye tried to make an in-depth and

detailed cultural investigation from the internal and external factors of literature, such as the publications produced by the group, the aggregation of the Crescent Poetry School, and the differences within the Crescent Poetry School. With the “influence anxiety” theory of American scholar Bloom, Ye proposed that the Crescent poets emerged from the anxiety of influence by deliberately misreading and revising the poetic tradition and the strong poets. The status of studying abroad in Britain and America led to poets’ infatuation with western culture and the contradiction of caring for and abandoning local culture, which deeply affected their individual cultural choice and literary creation.

Second, the Crescent School initially gathered into a group due to their common pursuit of drama. Centering on *the Morning supplement Drama*, they introduced western drama concepts, published drama comments, translated western classic plays and created dramas, and also started to set up drama schools and small theater performances, launched the National Drama Movement. As the initial literary dream of the Crescent School, drama was the study focus. Quanbing Cheng (2005) pointed out that the Crescent School’s dramatic thought was mainly reflected in two aspects. For pursuing nationality: Since the May 4th Movement, the extreme criticism was put on the Chinese traditional opera; and the tendency of new operas was completely westernization. The Crescent School proposed a new drama style of “National opera” in order to restore the national cultural dignity of drama, promoted the renaissance of Chinese civilization. For maintaining artistry: During the May 4th Movement, the “problem first” and “thought first” problem plays emerged, which emphasized the utilitarian value of drama’s propaganda and education, drama became a subordinate of politics and even reduced to a low-grade pastime. The Crescent group realized the embarrassing situation of drama, actively explored the law of drama itself, focused on the artistic value and the essence of drama. They believed that the value of drama lies in surpassing the real utilitarian purpose and exploring the profoundness of human heart. Chen asserted the Crescent School’s drama profoundly explained, for the first time in the history of modern Chinese culture, the aesthetic value of old drama; for this reason, the School’s exploration can be considered the first “Ideological Enlightenment” in modern Chinese drama. The Crescent literati groups took the renaissance of the Chinese nationality as their own responsibility, fully realizing the importance of maintaining drama nationality. They pushed Chinese drama onto the track of nationalization, promoted the drama improvement to the height of revival of national literature and art, hoping “national drama” could occupy a place on the world’s stage. Starting from the aesthetic of drama art, they explored the spirit of national drama and the close-related expression methods, which was similar to the artistic tendency of western drama to expression of aesthetics.

Third, compared with other areas of literature research on the Crescent School, the specialized study on novels has been slightly less prevalent in recent years. Changhua Huang (2010) mainly introduced the writers of marginal novels that had been amply overlooked and undervalued, departed from the literary activities, interpersonal relationships of the Crescent School, making a contribution to the development of the School by providing a list of the Crescent School’s novel writers and novel titles, which constituted detailed index material for latecomers. Huijun Zhang’s (2011) research was impressive

because of his discussion of the Crescent School novel's gains and losses, proposed that the School's novel creation had a common tendency to pursue artistic beauty, that is, to strive for beauty of form from language, skills and narration, and to maintain the moderation of imagination and emotion in the content, which was not only its characteristic but also the reason why its overall creative achievements were not outstanding.

Finally, as an important window to world literature, the Crescent School's achievements in literary translation deserved attention. Libo Huang (2010) explored the translation ideas of the Crescent School from the aspects of material selection, translation strategy, theory, and language and believed that the translation works of *the Crescent Monthly Magazine* included both translations of and introductions to foreign literary masterpieces and social science translations, reflected that the Crescent literati group tried to promote the creation of new literature, especially poetry and drama, through the introduction of European and American literature, and to seek a good way to change the backward social status by using Western political theory as a reference, showing the School's emphasis on beauty and practicality. Yanjie Huang (2018) systematically analyzed the translation of the Crescent School's Shakespearean dramas, discussed the different objectives and strategies of the Crescent School's members. Among which Yizhe Deng aims to introduce Shakespeare's poetic drama genre for adding new elements to Chinese new dramas, while Zhimo Xu and Dayu Sun's translation aims to prepare for the dramatic poems in the new poetry genre. The translation of Shakespeare's plays by The Crescent School, not only rectified the overflow of romanticism since the May 4th Movement, but also contributed to establish the new literature from enriching the topic content and expression form of new plays and poems.

### *2.3 The Crescent School's Political Activities and Thought*

The Crescent School was one of the most important ideological and cultural groups in modern China, with its political activities and ideological theories representing the focus of academic scholarship. Research in this area mainly focused on the School's important political activities, such as the Human Rights Movement, the liberal political ideas, and the individual members. The relevant research can be divided into the following two categories.

The first category was a comprehensive survey of political discussion activities. Yi Zhang (2004) started from the background of the Human Rights Movement and comprehensively expounded its political ideas (including the protection of human rights, the demand for democracy and the rule of law, the promotion of freedom of expression, the advocacy of expert politics and progressive improvement, and so on). Zhang affirmed the Human Rights Group profoundly reveals western politics such as human rights, rule of law, freedom of thought and speech, providing valuable theoretical resources for the national modern transformation. But their ideological proposition ignored sovereignty in the people and held that freedom of speech is not legal restrictions. Shuyu Chen (2009) used the confrontation between Shi Hu and Chiang Kai-shek as a perspective and discussed the Crescent Human Rights Movement as the background. It was proposed that the Human Rights Group represented by Shi Hu

played the role of “sergeant of monarch,” and was not concerned about the suffering of ordinary people; because of the opposition to the violent revolution and having formed a fragile alliance with the Kuomintang regime, it had to deal with the dilemma of being enemies in the political arena. Zhiqiang Liu (2014) made a detailed and systematic review of the entire Human Rights Movement, the role of Longji Luo, the constructed human rights theory and its theoretical origin, from the standpoint of time, space, and universality of human rights. Liu indicated Longji Luo’s human rights theory is the core of his whole political thoughts and the basis of his political activities, Longji Lou successively played the role of a liberal scholar and a political activist of the middle party. According to this, Liu proposed presented an inspiring viewpoint by which Longji Luo had simultaneously succeeded and failed in politics. Longji Lou’s liberal political speech only represented individuals, so he succeeded in politics discussion, however, taking practical actions in politics is not only an individual action, but also depends on the situation. In the 1940s, Longji Luo, as a centrist, intervened in the major historical events in China, but eventually his “third route” was smashed by force.

The second category selected a certain aspect of the political thought of the Human Rights Movement to conduct detailed research. Bifan Shi and Jianguo Shu (2000) pointed out that the Crescent School’s human rights ideas were modeled on the Anglo-American constitutional model and attempted to build a bourgeois democratic republic on the basis of the separation of powers, and that the School had wrongly pinned its political ideals on the decadent Kuomintang regime. Haixuan Wang (2007) discussed the situation of Chinese society through Zaoshi Wang’s articles published in *the Crescent Monthly Magazine* and by focusing on the material, social, philosophical, political aspects and the points of contact between China and the Western world. Ning Zhan (2011) interpreted the idea of freedom of speech and explored the resistance spirit and ordered consciousness from the perspective of human rights and the constitutional government, pointed out that the idea of free speech of the Crescent School was not only a continuation of man’s liberation since the May Fourth Movement, but also the more important value which lay in the progress of democratization at the institutional level, which can be regarded as a breakthrough from ideological and cultural Enlightenment in favor of institutional construction. Besides, Zhan pointed that the Crescent School’s political articles belonged to the political thought of Enlightenment—although, as a liberal intellectual group, political thought at this stage had the guidance of institutional construction, though to a large extent it maintained at the level of discussing politics, not having broken through the cultural level and moved toward actual political activities quite yet. However, this thesis showed a clear tendency to replace the Shi Hu Scholar Group with Shi Hu individuals. Few comments were made on members of human rights schools other than Shi Hu, and there was an objective oversight of the integrity and diversity of the Crescent School’s Human Rights Group. Qingyue Zhu (2017) analyzed the Chinese Marxists’ views on these issues from the perspective of Marxism; the response to the questions of origin, substance, and resolution reflected the political propositions and limitations of the Crescent School’s human rights faction. Zhu believed the root of China’s problems was in raising people’s survival issue rather than the abstract human rights,

the root cause was the oppression rather than traditional civilization is inferior, advocated solving China's issues through proletarian revolution rather than a constitutional movement, which reflected the political views and limitations of the Crescent Human rights group from the side.

#### *2.4 Research from the Perspective of Intellectuals Group*

At present, limited research on the Crescent School exists from the perspective of the group. The current research mainly shows two trends: on one hand, researchers often placed and investigated the Crescent School in the development process of Chinese liberal groups. In *Freedom Expectation: An Introduction to Shi Hu School Scholars* (Shen, 2009), Weiwei Shen explored the structural form of Shi Hu's literati group from the background of its times and its internal rationale and analyzed the important representatives of the Chinese liberal intellectual group in all periods. In the third chapter, entitled "The Crescent School's Free Fight", a detailed examination of the literati group centered on Shi Hu—which used *the Crescent Monthly Magazine* as public space to rebel against the Kuomintang dictatorship and pursued assets of democratic politics—fully demonstrates the helplessness of intellectuals fighting for freedom under authoritarianism. Qing Zhang's (2004) writings was also very distinctive. Based on detailed historical data, the Shi Hu Scholar Group was examined in the perspective of the development and evolution of Chinese liberalism, discussing the gathering of literati pedigrees and their commitment to important issues, such as the exploration of order and meaning, the continuation of the May 4th Movement, the construction of an academic society, and the development of power network; this profoundly demonstrated the dilemma of the Shi Hu Scholar Group. The book included a list of liberal intellectuals with Shi Hu as the center, relying on the Ping Society, and attached a brief overview of the individual members, which was quite different from Xiangxi Fu's (2015) *On the Crescent School* and did not include nearly half of them. The discrepancy may be due to their different approaches—Qing Zhang's was based on the field of ideological history, while Xiangxi Fu's was based on literary research considerations; as such, the inclusion criteria were different, resulting in large variations that ought to be majorly overlapping. In addition, *Hu Shi and China's Renaissance: Liberalism in the Chinese Revolution (1917–1937)* (1970), involved the Crescent School's ideological remarks, which was by Grieder, Jerome B, an American scholar, pointed out that the failure of liberal intellectuals centered around Shi Hu in the transformation of modern Chinese society was not caused by the individuals themselves but rather by liberalism, which did not meet the needs of Chinese society at that time and could not provide answers to violence and revolution. These researchers often showed unique understanding, though limited to the main purpose of the book; it was then impossible to conduct an in-depth and comprehensive investigation.

On the other hand, researchers often interpreted with a comparative cultural perspective, as the Crescent School was a group of intellectuals studying abroad in Europe and America. There were two strands. One paid attention on the Crescent School's political speech, focusing on its origins with Laski and the Fabian Society. Yi Lu (2002) noted, the Ping Society and Fabian Society shared common characteristics in the knowledge elite composition, college-style activities, and moderate and

progressive political propositions, and discussed the relationship between Harold Laski, an important member of the Fabian Society, and the members of the Crescent School, evaluating the acceptance of Laski's doctrine, including early political pluralism, freedom of speech and opposition to violent revolution, by the members of the Ping Society. The second strand followed the Crescent School's literary side, focusing on the origins of the Bloomsbury cultural circle. Xiaoxia Yu (2014) evaluated the formation of cultural groups during the Republic of China by comparing the similarities between the Bloomsbury Group and the Crescent School, such as their origin, membership, and activities, showed that it imitated and followed the cultural styles of similar groups in the West, reflecting the efforts of some intellectuals to integrate Chinese and Western cultural spirits and to transform the traditional cultural identity after the May Fourth Movement. In addition, American scholar Lawrence (2008) using letters, paintings, and other material to present the cultural exchange between the Crescent School and the Bloomsbury Group and exploring their similarities, such as the love for peace, advocating progressive improvement, and their political and artistic characteristics, which had become the ideological bases of cross-border exchanges between the two cultural groups, in which methods and the use of multiple types of material represented a novel approach.

### 3. Possible New Research Directions

Throughout the twenty-first century, the academic community has maintained a continuous interest in the Crescent School, presenting a pleasing trend of diversified perspectives, specialization, and expanding scope that also reflected the ideological richness of the Crescent School. However, most are unidirectional studies, not conducive to show the Crescent School's complete subjectivity. Comprehensive research ought to be conducted from a dual perspective, as the combination of literary, intellectual history, and relevant theories of organization, in order to promote the research of the Crescent School turn to the depth direction. At the same time, it will also have potential positive significance for the diversification and effectiveness of organizational research.

#### 3.1 Deepen Research on the Crescent Political Group

The current research has deficiency of being highly concentrated in literature. First, case studies were often focused on a few literary writers. Members of the Crescent School who were passionate about literature, especially in the field of new poetry, have gradually been favored; however, the political discussion group has been neglected. For example, many related papers had not mentioned Zaoshi Wang, a competent cadre in the middle and late stages of the human rights movement at all; nor had an in-depth analysis and evaluation of ideological connotations been conducted. Although the literary translation in *the Crescent Monthly Magazine* had already attracted the attention of some researchers, the translations of political articles had been ignored. Finally, the publication research on the Crescent Bookstore also focused on literary books, while the published works in political science and sociology had not received corresponding attention.

### 3.2 Emphasize Research on the Group Relationship Network

The academic community has paid attention to political discussion activities; for the Crescent School located in the cultural institutions of colleges and universities, however, this perspective has not been given enough consideration. The political concern of the Crescent School was externally expressed as learning and reconsidering politics, which differentiated it from other knowledge groups of the same period. The Crescent School in Shanghai once taught in Jinan University, China Public School, Guanghua University, and other institutions, and formed a certain group relationship network; thus, this situation ought to be an integral part of the study.

### 3.3 Promote the Systematic Group Research of the Crescent School

Research on the Crescent School mainly centered on the following. First, it mostly existed in the periodic research of the liberal intellectual group. Liberal intellectuals were the focus of Chinese intellectual studies, and the time of *the Crescent Monthly Magazine* was the golden period; therefore, many writings about liberal intellectuals referred to the Crescent literati. However, this type of research was neither specialized, nor fully investigated. Second, it was often attached to the overview of the School's development and evolution. Most studies on the Crescent School used this as the background; thus, these were often only superficial and fell into the same category. A detailed investigation was therefore difficult to achieve. Third, research on the study about period of *Morning Supplement* was obviously insufficient. Due to the long-term controversy about the rise and fall of the Crescent School, many researchers had been restricted from the perspective of literary research and had failed to explore it from a cultural perspective, establishing the publication of *the Crescent Monthly Magazine* with a literary orientation as their starting point. Most cultural activities in the early stage and the ideological comments during *the Morning Supplement* period were mostly ignored, which hindered the overall exploration.

### 3.4 A New Integrated Research Perspective: Organic Combination of Literature, Intellectual History and Histology

By systematically categorizing the research on the Crescent School, we can clearly discern the limitations that generated from their unidirectional perspective. Starting from the two most important achievements of the Crescent School, namely the value of new Chinese literature and ideas, research with a comprehensive perspective that combines the history of literature and ideas can make up for the shortcomings of existing studies. In previous research, an attempt to surpass the unilateral study of literary history or thought history was made by Xiaoyong Guo (2008), examined the formation and development of the Crescent School starting from the Crescent Bookstore and *the Crescent Monthly Magazine*, exploring the unremitting efforts and difficulties to make speech space accessible and analyzing the Crescent School as a derogatory symbol in the history of new Chinese literature to present the circumstances of liberal knowledge groups. However, the research defined the Crescent School as intellectuals gathered around *the Crescent Monthly Magazine* after 1928, focused on that period, only tracing the activities of the Crescent School in the Beijing period and not observing them

from the perspective of literature and politics. The development of the Crescent School has obviously been narrowed to a considerable extent, and its value weakened. However, research from the comprehensive perspective of the combination of literary and thought history will help restore and maximize the Crescent School's subjectivity.

In addition, the overall research lacks reasonable theoretical support. Their research lacked accepted theories, which made them only elaborate texts and phenomena. For example, Shoutong Zhu studied the Crescent School comprehensively from the perspective of "gentleman's style". However, the concept of "gentleman's style" came from the interpretation of the researcher personally, and lack of preciseness. Besides, Liu only focused on the investigation of the development of the Crescent School, which had a summary significance, but lack of depth from the theoretical perspective. When we use the relevant theories in histology to study the Crescent School, we will clearly and effectively clarify the characteristics and connotation of this liberal cultural organization, so as to truly and comprehensively showing its original features.

When examining the emergence of the Crescent School, we may as well start from the analysis of the important dimensions of organization, such as culture, power, environment, etc. From "the basic structure characteristics of the organization when it is create will remain unchanged..." (Gao, 2011) histology viewpoint, we can also reinterpret the important cultural phenomena that the external form of the Crescent School constantly changed, but it always condensed to be organization with liberalism. Furthermore, we investigate the organizational form with the open systems in organizational study; we will effectively discuss the existence of the Crescent School. We will solve long-standing academic differences on the basic issues, such as whether the Crescent School exists as a group organization, and how to explain the change of its organizational form. Sincerely, the Crescent School did not exactly fit the definition of an organization from the rational systems perspective; however, if we dispatch the Crescent School in the open system perspective, we will get more value recognition. During its existence of more than ten years, the members gathered and reorganized, and the external form changed, but it could always be recognized as the literati organization, which was clearly different from other contemporary groups. The reason is that the members were spiritually aggregated by western liberal traditions, and to some extent, we can think that the Crescent Organization is a loose coupling system called by liberalism.

#### **4. Conclusion**

After examining the progress of research on the Crescent School in the 21st century, with China as the main focus, it can be concluded that research has moved away from ideological constraints and is heading towards rational pluralism. However, to avoid the one-sided, fragmented, superficial, and repetitive shortcomings of the Crescent School research, a new analytical perspective is needed that considers the organic correlation between professional, in-depth, and comprehensive research. When summarizing and absorbing research, it is important to also consider misunderstandings, shallow and



repetitive approaches that may arise from assuming unidirectionality and a lack of theoretical foundation. In short, it is necessary to establish a research method that focuses on the complete rather than one-sided image of the Crescent School. This method should combine perspectives from literary and intellectual history and use related theories in organizational studies. This approach will enable us to gain a comprehensive understanding of the unique cultural connotation and ideological value of the Crescent School and establish its complete subjectivity. It will also benefit organizational research by enriching samples and broadening horizons from other times and different social systems.

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