

现代中国的南亚、东南亚研究 (2021.4.8)

Last term I took a course by Professor Wang Liping called *Ethnographies of Modern Education: China and Beyond* in which we touched upon Liang Shuming. I found a book by Guy S. Alitto exploring the life of the ‘Chinese Tagore’. When Liang saw a conflict between agrarianism and national power at the time of the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931, he pointed to the models he considered suitable for China: India and its unarmed but united moral resistance to British imperialism; and Denmark, which instead of struggling against its shrinking international position, concentrated on improving the quality of life for its people. Confronted with full-scale war in the summer of 1937, Liang’s answer was fundamentally unchanged: spiritual solidarity, not industry and military hardware, would save China (Alitto, 1979, p. 13). I thought it tied into the article by Wang Bangwei on Indian Studies at Peking University. I also found a [paper](#) by Joseph Ciaudo entitled *Chinese discussions about Indian culture around the May Fourth Era: Some remarks on a conceptual aporia*¹

Ciaudo writes: ‘for Liang, every culture, like every life, anchors itself in a fundamental will (yiyu 意欲). This will can be oriented in different directions (Liang Shuming 1921, 352). Facing the problems of life, man can either “go forward”, “adjust his own intention”, or “turn back and move backwards” (Liang 1921, 381–382). Liang notes that life takes place in three different realms: the material (wuzhi 物質), the social (shehui 社會), and the spiritual (jingshen 精神) (Liang 1921, 379–381). This typology starts off his approach toward Indian, Chinese and Western cultures. They are all distinguished by attitudes toward the world. With its will to go forward, the West has focused its culture on the material world; Chinese culture with its will oriented toward harmony (tiaohé 調和) epitomizes the adjustment of one’s intention in the social world; finally, Indian culture turns its back to the world and addresses the problems of the spirit. For Liang, “the vast majority of Indians do not want to preserve their lives, they usually want to leave the world—they call it nirvāna” (Liang 1921, 436–437).

Ciaudo also notes how in his essay on the “digestion of civilisation” (wenming zhi xiaohua 文明之消化), Cai Yuanpei stated that the philosophical richness of Indian civilisation had been stained by the foul smell of religion (Cai 1916, 416). For Cai, when China “digested India”, it luckily did not convert to a religious Weltanschauung. Since Cai Yuanpei was advocating the replacement of “religion with aesthetic education” (Cai 1917), Indian culture was an example of what the Chinese should not aspire to. The metaphor of digestion can also be found in Hu Shi’s 胡適 (1891-1962) writing, notably in his *History of Chinese Philosophy*, in which he considered that “after the Tang dynasty, Indian philosophy progressively became a part of Chinese thought and civilisation” (Hu 1919, 5). For Hu Shi, China had digested the Indian culture during the Six Dynasties. Therefore all the good things which the Indians had to offer had been passed on to the Chinese, while India was left to wither. I was curious as to whether here we see parallels between orientalist scholarship of British Indologists in Calcutta and Chinese Indologists in Beijing imagining India in Hegelian

¹ Ciaudo writes: ‘In Liang’s understanding, Eastern cultures were not lagging behind Western modernity. They simply took a different path. He even turned upside down the thesis of the backwardness of Eastern cultures: for him, they were advanced or literally “ripe too early” (zaoshu 早熟) (Liang 1921, 526). China and India had tried to address the problems of society and spirit before solving the material necessities of life. Alitto returns to the question that troubled Liang’s generation: why had China and India not developed economically and undergone an industrial revolution as the West had? Liang contended the Easterner’s subjective factor—the underlying attitude or direction of the Will—was the only sufficient cause (yin). Elsewhere, Alitto writes, Liang felt ‘unchanging China’ would have remained unchanged forever if not for the West.’

terms as a spiritual realm outside of history. Was there a countervailing trend of romantic spiritualist Indology in the new Republican era of China too? I was also reminded of the conversation we had last week on Edward Said's orientalism and the deceptive binary it places of a western occident bearing down on an eastern orient rather than seeing the Occident-Orient relation as an emergent dimension of difference-making in different parts of the world, at different times, and as much a north-south, northeast/southwest etc. phenomenon as east-west. In a way that the Orient and Occident are superpositional rather than binary, could a nation exhibit characteristics of both at the same time such as the India of British colonialism and the India of Coedes's Indianized States of Southeast Asia. Where also would the Japanese colonisation of Southeast Asia sit within Said's schematic?

I was also curious as to the contrasts between British Indologists and Chinese Indologists that might have been conditioned by the historical junctures of their writing. For Liang Shuming, like many intellectuals of the time, vital charges lay in confronting China's decades of peasant suffering, in a moment when intellectuals were questioning the futility in imitating the urban industrialised civilisation of the West and, observing the spiritually polluted vast network of foreign concessions and treaty ports, were turning toward China's countryside. Liang Shuming would draw on Sun Yat Sen's call for a psychological reconstruction of the nation, writing of a 'new consciousness [...] to the special character of [China's] original social structures and to [China's] inevitable future' (Alitto, 1979, p194). I wondered in what way Tagore and the emergence of an anticolonial movement in India energised a different mode of Indological study to British Sanskritists writing earlier and near the purported zenith of its imperial project. Alitto raises an interesting dimension to how many ideas of the 1930s were driven by a sense of culture as a unique, non-repetitive essence, national in origin and significance, and set apart from the sociopolitical realities of modernization: 'the cliché Chinese (or Indian, Japanese, or other) spirit with Western technology' in all its myriad forms arose from a fear of spiritual and cultural de-racination and frequently culminated in the fundamentally modern emotional and intellectual response of nationalism. For example, German romanticism was inextricable from German nationalism and Pan-Germanism; Pan-Slavism incorporated Slavophile ideas; and the Pan-Islam movement absorbs the spiritual-cultural revival of the Muslim brotherhoods. The ideas of Pan-Asianists became the underpinnings of Japanese imperialism, and even such a man as Gandhi became a nationalist leader. I was also curious as to how the Great Depression and financial crisis may have generated a reversion toward culture as a protected essence, and how the Asian financial crisis or 2008 financial crisis create psychological continuities across difference.

In Wang Gungwu's paper *Two Perspectives of Southeast Asian Studies: Singapore and China*, he writes of how for the Chinese resident in Southeast Asia, a Nanyang Chinese consciousness emerged early in the 20th Century, enhanced by Japanese ambitions and their incursions into China since the 1920s. I was curious as to whether Liang Shuming and Cai Yuanpei were also involved in the emergence of Nanyang scholarship. In [Southeast Asian Studies in Greater China](#), Liu Hong notes how in the early 20th Century, a number of Chinese scholars trained in Japan and influenced by the 'South Seas Fever' of the time developed research sensibilities on the Southern Ocean, the Nanyang 南洋. In 1908, some Chinese students and officials in Tokyo formed an association devoted to issues of Southeast Asian commerce and published the *Magazine of the Research Association for Commerce in the Nanyang Archipelago* (《南洋群島商業研究會

雜誌》)。Two decades later, the Bureau of Nanyang Cultural Affairs (南洋文化事業部) was established at Jinan University in Shanghai and published a scholarly journal on Southeast Asia. In 1940, a group of Chinese scholars and men of learning exiled in Singapore established the China South Seas Society (中國南洋學會), which has continued to publish the *Journal of the South Seas Society* and monographs. Liu documents the presence of Southeast Asian scholarship in China today - Xiamen University; Zhongshan University; Jinan University; Yunnan; Guangxi and notes how at Peking University, the Institute of South and Southeast Asian Studies was formed in 1985 and incorporated into the Institute of Asian and African Studies six years later; now part of the School of International Studies.

I was interested in how Wang Gungwu described scholarship during the Vietnam War, Sino-Soviet split and increasing anti-communist western pressures where Chinese scholars wrote favourably about links with local anti-colonial and communist movements, some of which were actively supported by Southeast Asian Chinese while often not being able to travel to Southeast Asia. In his book *Home is Not Here*, Wang Gungwu writes autobiographically: 'I was born in Dutch-ruled Surabaya in 1930 when the Great Depression had brought the capitalist world to its knees. We were far from China, a country divided by warlords and now threatened with invasion by Imperial Japan, the new maritime power. My story really begins with the three of us trying to get back home, to China, but only getting as far as Ipoh, in British Malaya. For the next fifteen years, there were other tries and failures. The three of us did go to Nanjing in 1947. Waiting to go to China and returning to Malaya shaped my life more than I realized. Now that I am old, I find so much of my life to be traceable to those two places, and can see that my early story has a double perspective. An image of Nanjing reminds me of what I seemed to be looking for several times in my life while Ipoh represents the world of multiple cultures that I lived with and learnt to love.' I was interested in whether a mode of tidalectics as a schema of return and belonging might locate the emergence and evolution of a Nanyang consciousness in Wang Gungwu's work.

I had not read much of the scholarship of Wang Gungwu prior to this week. I read his descriptions of how in 1959, he ran a radio series from the University of Malaya, *A Short History of the Nanyang Chinese* exploring the early history of relations between China and Southeast Asia – the Nanyang trading scene, Zheng He's fifteenth-century naval expedition, the defensive nature of tributary relations between China and Southeast Asia, the coolie trade, Nanyang trading networks, and the rise of Chinese patriotism among the overseas Chinese. 'I immersed myself in local publications and historical documents and paid even greater attention to new scholarly works on the changing nature of the ethnic Chinese community, especially social-science works of the 1950s. At the same time, this nation was in the throes of a dramatic evolution, including between 1961 and 1965 the incorporation into the new Federation of Malaysia of a number of former British colonies with sizeable Chinese communities. That marked the beginning of my comparative research into the efforts of the various ethnic Chinese communities to come to terms with the new political realities.

I read how Wang Gungwu has often spoken of his passionate objection to the terms "overseas Chinese" (*huaqiao*) and "Chinese diaspora", which he believes have invidious political connotations. Instead, he favours the more neutral "Chinese overseas". His objection is partly that these words suggest transnational cohesion and homogeneity, whereas Chinese overseas commonly adapt to local environments. More importantly, he is aware of the terms' emotive power in

Southeast Asia, where unconscionable politicians draw attention to them in order to scapegoat ethnic Chinese and raise doubts about their loyalty. Gregor Benton and Hong Liu, the authors of *Diasporic Chinese Ventures: The Life and Work of Wang Gungwu* write how, 'as a Chinese living outside China, Wang Gungwu experienced the transition from sojourner (before 1945) to settler, a passage summed up in the Chinese phrase *luodi shenggen*, "falling to the ground and striking root", a description of the accommodationist project, which includes permanent settlement abroad, the renunciation of Chinese citizenship, and public adjustment to the majority way of life, while privately preserving a Chinese lifestyle and cultural values. Later in his life, when making this journey to China, Wang followed in the footsteps of many young ethnic Chinese males of his generation, an act of "homegoing" encapsulated in the phrase, *luoye guigen*, "fallen leaves return to their roots", a reference to those Chinese who remain loyal to their native places and wish (often in vain) to return to them.

I was curious in some questions he raised in *Chinese Revolution and Overseas Chinese*: were the overseas Chinese much interested in the contents of the Chinese revolution? Were they more impressed with the focused goals of the communist revolution after 1949? Some radical youth among the Chinese overseas cheered the removal of the corrupt politicians and bureaucrats of the previous regime, the violent land reforms in the countryside, and the dismantling of the old social structures. Others also welcomed the replacement of ancient traditions in favour of a modern and progressive outlook. In any case, for most Chinese overseas, whatever their age and persuasion, they were conscious of living outside the country. I was reminded of the contention from last week of distance and the archipelago that escapes dialectics and whether Wang Gungwu's exploration of a cultural mosaic, diversity and difference of Chinese identities in Southeast Asia describes a similar process to Wolter's description of localisation of Indian ideas in Southeast Asia. I was reminded of how he describes materials fractured and restated and therefore drained of their original significance, in what way similarly might the diffraction and refraction of wavelengths in the age of radio and television be able to describe the locality and evolution of Chinese ideas in Southeast Asia in the long 20th Century.

I was interested in how Wang Gungwu framed scholarship on Southeast Asia emergent out of Singapore and the formation of the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS) in 1965. In October 1964, China set off its first nuclear device which would generate shockwaves in Southeast Asia, acutely in Indonesia. I was curious as to the two timelines of Wang Gungwu finishing his PhD in 1957 in London at the School of Oriental and African Studies while Lee Yuan Kew, 17 May 1956, [Associated Press](#), met with Mr. Marshall, 'first Minister of Singapore for talks with the British Government at GV Malaya House. I was also curious as to Wang Gungwu's contention that by word and action, the bigger powers like Japan and the PRC have the duty to dispel fears of a possible new "Greater East Asia". To allay these fears, they will have to develop greater sensitivity in dealing with the peoples and cultures of the region. In particular, the economic pressure in some quarters to view southeastern Asia's integration with northeastern Asia as desirable in the longer run, China's perception of Southeast Asia as a distinct region may be diluted.' I was curious as to whether the Belt and Road and competing Japanese infrastructure visions of the 21st Century might actually be concentrating the perception of Southeast Asia as a distinct region and why integration should necessarily lead to the dilution of distinctness? The closing note that we should not pretend that the region has been self-determined or that it has always gener-

ated its own momentum opens up an interesting question that returns to the schism of whether any culture generates its own momentum, the 1920s argument that culture is a unique, non-repetitive essence, national in origin and significance, and set apart from the sociopolitical realities of modernization vs. the idea that cultures are always and everywhere the archipelagic cinders of a nucleating process that borrows, localises, digests, refracts, diffracts, leaves and returns, *luodi shenggen*, “falling to the ground and striking root” *luoye guigen*, “fallen leaves return to their roots” from the outside.

王邦维：《北京大学的印度学研究：八十年的回顾》

王赓武、薛学了：《新加坡和中国关于东南亚研究的两种不同观点》



Me, my father and mother in front of our Green Town house, on the eve of our departure to China. I would have been 16 years old, my education interrupted by the war.



Studying at home in Green Town, after the end of the war.



With our Taizhou relations. My grandfather in dark jacket and with a beard, sitting down with my “13th grandfather”.



With my uncle just before boarding my ship from Shanghai to Singapore.