

Main Melody and Polyphony: Reading the Sinosphere as the Methodology for Studying the Sinosphere

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This paper focuses on the theoretical and methodological issues in the study of East Asian Sinographic texts. Previous research has generally followed four basic models: the “Sinocentric perspective,” “influence studies,” the “challenge-response theory,” and the “internal development theory.” These models reflect nineteenth- and twentieth-century modes of thought, but their limitations have become increasingly evident today. In response, the author proposes the concept of the “Sinographic Cultural Sphere as Method,” which emphasizes viewing East Asian Sinographic texts as an integrated whole while recognizing both differences within similarities and similarities within differences. This approach seeks to move beyond the dichotomy of center and periphery, advocating for multidirectional book circulation and mutual interaction. In the era of globalization, research on East Asian Sinographic texts should focus on identifying commonalities through particularities, thereby contributing to cultural exchange, integration, and the development of East Asian scholarship in the 21st century.

Keywords: Study of East Asian Sinographic Texts; Sinocentric Perspective; Influence Studies; Challenge–Response Theory; Internal Development Theory; Sinographic Cultural Sphere as Method

Introduction

Since the late 19th century, East Asian scholarship has started to break away from traditional patterns due to the influence of Western academic works, which completed “modern” conversion in no particular order. The word “modern” conversion, essentially, can be understood as using western academic theories, perspectives and methodologies to handle issues concerning East Asia. Those theories and methodologies were better than the traditional scholarship of East Asia because they were obviously more scientific. Scholars of the humanities in East Asia began to have a common consensus in the mid-1970s that there was a shortage of resources regarding effective theories and methodologies. Therefore, employing western theories to analyse and critique material on East Asian literature, history, religion and ideology was considered as a matter of course. On the other hand, some scholars disregarded western theories and methodologies, who were intoxicated with old traditions and became a “critic of citations” for satisfying themselves in an unrealistic academic world. They not only turn a deaf ear to criticism from abroad, but also turn a blind eye to imminent crisis of the humanities. Ruan Yuan 阮元 (1764-1849) from the Qing 清

(1644-1912) dynasty said that “a discussion about the ups and downs of academia could be conducted after a century.”¹ Hence, the 21st century is the time we are capable of pondering on the gains and losses of the East Asian academic works. And the focus should be on theories and methodologies.

To begin with, we should undergo an evaluation on the popular methods that had been used for East Asian studies in the last hundred years. The methods can be categorized into four types. Sources of literary studies will be mainly used below as it is my area of expertise.

First, Sinocentrism.

In East Asia, this concept has been deeply ingrained in the minds of the Chinese people that considered the culture of surrounding states was the extension and reproduction of Chinese culture and consequently resulted in a hierarchical system. This system was formed as it was safeguarded by the tributary system of China. It also strengthened a widespread social psychology. David C. Kang 康燦雄 states that “China is the leading country in the system of East Asia Other countries in East Asia tried to follow the example of China one after another, which accepted the status of China as the regional centre in varying degree.”² This has had a direct influence on people’s attitudes and perspectives toward China and its relationship with neighbours up to now. Kuang Zhouyi 況周頤 (1859-1926) from the late Qing dynasty, he mentioned Vietnamese writer Nguyễn Miên Thẩm 阮綿審 (1819-1970) and Chosŏn writer Pak Ŭn 朴闇 (1479-1504) in *Huifeng cihua* 蕙風詞話. His conclusion was “customs from abroad are different from China’s, which could be ended without authorization. Undoubtedly, it shows the prosperity of Chinese culture.”³ It is often seen in East Asian studies, and it is not limited to Chinese scholars. A book by the Japanese sinologist Kanda Kiichirō 神田喜一郎 (1897-1984) called *Nihon tenshi shiwa* 日本填詞史話 (1965), but its main title was *Nihon ni okeru Chūgoku bungaku* 日本における中國文學 which translates to “Chinese literature in Japan.” In the preface, he clearly points out that the focus of the book is “Chinese literature in Japan, in other words, Japanese Sinographic literature is a tributary of Chinese literature.”⁴ It shows the existence of centre and periphery as well as the confrontation between mainstream and tributary. Besides the field of literature, historical studies are also in a similar situation. Fujitsuka Chikashi 藤塚隣’s (1879-1948) masterpiece – *Shinchō bunka tōden no kenkyū* 清朝文化東傳研究 (1975) is one of the examples. Even

¹ Ruan Yuan 阮元, “*Shi jia zhai yang xin lu xu* 十駕齋養新錄序” in Chen Wenhe 陳文和, ed., *Qian Daxin quanji* 錢大昕全集 (Jiangsu: Jiangsu guji chubanshe, 1997), v.7, p. 1.

² David C. Kang, trans. by Chen Changxu 陳昌煦, *Xifang zhiqian de dongya* 西方之前的東亞 (*East Asia Before the West: Five Centuries of Trade and Tribute*) (Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian Chubanshe, 2016), 2.

³ Kuang Zhouyi 況周頤, *Huifeng cihua* 蕙風詞話 (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1960), v. 5, p. 124.

⁴ Kanda Kiichirō 神田喜一郎, *Nihon ni okeru Chūgoku bungaku* 日本における中國文學 (Tokyo: Nigensha, 1965), p. 2.

though it is about a study on Chosŏn's *silhak* (實學, practical learning), its focus is on the eastward transmission of Qing's *qianjia* 乾嘉 and *daoxue* 道學 studies. In the Sinosphere of East Asia, it was an indisputable historical fact that China occupies a central place as a suzerain in terms of culture. Using Sinocentrism as a methodology for East Asian studies undoubtedly resulted in China's dominant position and disclosed its wide extent and profound scope. It also concealed the subjectivity and hindered the diversity in Sinographic literatures outside China. In addition, it overlooked their creativeness, values as well as meanings, and often used China as the standard to evaluate their merits and demerits. Up to this day, the latent influence is still intact and exist in the consciousness of scholars of East Asian studies, Chinese scholars especially. In order to re-explore the world of East Asian studies more neutrally, Chinese scholars should sincerely and bravely draw on the experience of current western scholars's re-examination of Eurocentrism when they engage in introspection about Sinocentrism.

Second, influence studies.

It was introduced by French scholars of comparative literature studies in the 19th century. It was the representative theory and methodology of comparative literature from the French school. The theory focuses on the study about how two or various literary works affect one another in terms of themes, books or emotions. However, the methodology merely emphasizes on how “receivers” consciously or unconsciously identify their intellectual products with the system of “dispatchers” or “forerunners.” Due to the magnificent achievement of French literature in the 19th century and Europe's superior status, the methodology of comparative literature studies resulted in promoting French culture or elevating the glory of the suzerain's culture. This methodology was widely employed in the history of literary studies, such as Danish scholar Gerog Brandes's (1842-1927) *Main Currents in Nineteenth Century Literature* was an influential masterwork. He not only opposed to view individual countries' literatures as isolated and unique phenomenon but also refused to adopt a conservative attitude to engage in writing the history of literary studies. One of his famous sayings was quoted by Lu Xun 魯迅 (1881-1936) – “mental ‘deafness’ brought about ‘dumbness.’”⁵ But he was immoderate when he employed the methodology of comparative literature studies to engage in writing the history of literary studies. His perspective was disclosed when he compared the relationship between Danish literature and German literature. He explained Danish literature with examples “once there was a literature, known as ‘my’ real great piece of work, and if they could receive recognition of the public”, then I would have a heartfelt admiration and “give a laurel” to the great tradition of German literature.⁶ In Japan, there was a similar academic masterwork written by Kojima Noriyuki 小島憲之 (1913-1998) called *Jōdai Nihon*

⁵ Lu Xun 魯迅, “Zhun Fengyue tan You long er ya” 准風月談·由聾而啞 in *Lu Xun quanji* 魯迅全集 (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 2005), v. 5, p. 294.

⁶ Georg Brandes, trans. by Liu Banjiu 劉半九, *Deguo de langmanpai* 德國的浪漫派 (*German Romanticism*) (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1981), v. 2, p. 4.

bungaku to Chūgoku bungaku 上代日本文學と中國文學 subtitled as “Investigation of Comparative Literature Studies through Crénologie” (“Chudian lun” 出典論 also known as “Yuanquan lun” 淵泉論 or “Crénologie”).⁷ A Japanese scholar Nogami Toyochirō 野上豊一郎 (1883-1950) elaborated on French scholar of comparative literature Paul Van Tieghem’s (1871-1959) “Crénologie” in his book *Hikaku Bungaku Ron’yō* 比較文學論要. “It became a starting point of the studies. It was just like searching for a fountain head, and exploring the original text. “Crénologie” includes origin of the literature influence, exploration of original texts, tendency of thought and one more thing.”⁸ When “Sinocentrism” met France’s comparative literature’s “Influence Studies,” They clicked with each other and became the most common methodology in East Asia’s comparative literature. East Asia or Europe’s literature were often regarded as a vassal of literature of China or France. Researchers had a paternalistic attitude, who always attempted to weaken uniqueness and originality of writers from Sinosphere or French quarter. This methodology satisfied description of one’s origin, but the reasons why one specific writer or country chose other origin or same origin as the “blueprint” of their works, questions like that were often excluded from their considerations. It is obvious that it was a shortcoming.

Third, Challenge – Response theory.

This theory was asserted by Arnold J. Toynbee (1889-1975) in *A Study of History* to examine the development of civilizations. Western sinologists or eastern scholars frequently employed this theory in their academic research. John K. Fairbank was the representative of East Asian studies. It is slightly changed to be a “Western impact-Chinese response” theory. One party’s “challenge” was active and predominant, but another party’s “response” was passive and helpless. The civilization continues to survive if it could deal with challenges of western civilization (of course the glory should also be given to the challenger); Otherwise, this civilization will come to an end if they are unable to respond to new challenges. The only solution is “westernization”. This theory reflects “Eurocentrism” that emphasizes conflicts and confrontations between different civilizations. In this context, the only way-out of East Asian studies is to employ western theories. In the case of East Asian scholarship, the process of changing from traditional to modern form mainly based on western scholarship. Hence, this perspective has been widely accepted and continued today. Even though it was obvious that this methodology accomplished many research achievements (European and American academia especially), its shortcoming attracted the attention of western well-educated people. Paul. A. Cohen argued the challenges and critiques of this methodology in *Discovering History in China: American Historical Writing on the Recent Chinese Past* 在中國發現歷史 (1984). In 2019, he concluded that the methodology of “Western impact- Chinese response”

⁷ Kojima Noriyuki 小島憲之, *Jōdai Nihon bungaku to Chūgoku bungaku* 上代日本文學と中國文學 (Tokyo: Hanawa Shobō, 1988), v. 1, p. 5.

⁸ Liu Jiemin 劉介民, ed., *Bijiao wenxue yiwen xuan* 比較文學譯文選 (Changsha: Hunan renmin chubanshe, 1984), p. 80.

brought about three drawbacks in terms of theory and practice: one is “to assume the interaction between China and the west in the 19th century to be a one-way street, all cars drove from the west to the east, which was regarded as an oversimplification.” The second one is “to ignore the aspects irrelevant to or having little connection with challenges between China and western countries in the 19th century”, and shows disregard for “the result of China’s internal factors.” The last one is to stress more on historical reasons such as academic, cultural and psychological factors and neglect social, political and economic factors because this theory places emphasis on “meaningful responses.” On the whole, “previous researches that overlooked Chinese thoughts and behavior were rectified by this theory, but it strengthened one-side, distorted and biased methods for understanding China in the 19th century.”⁹ Cohen’s theoretical standpoints and methodological approach had strongly criticized “Western impact-Chinese response” and contributed to the emergence of many new research results on “history that was discovered in China.” In the east, Mizoguchi Yūzō 溝口雄三 (1932-2010) was a Japanese scholar who proposed “using China as a methodology.” His intention was “to begin from the internal part of China and according to the actual situation attempt to discover another Chinese principles-related research method that could be equal to European principles.”¹⁰ Also, using the work of Li Zhuowu 李卓吾 (1527-1602) and Huang Zongxi 黃宗羲 (1610-1695) as case studies, he provided additional clues on Chinese thoughts from the mid-Ming dynasty to the mid-Qing dynasty and supplied another way of understanding history. Until 2006, some scholars like Liu Zaifu 劉再復 and Li Zehou 李澤厚 (1930-2021) still considered Mizoguchi Yūzō’s mindset as “the neglect of external clues of the mainstream when putting emphasis on the internal clues, and thus it only documented one-sided and inconsistent history.” “Having one hundred Huang Zongxi would be considered unnecessary if there were no external stimuli such as the Opium Wars, the first Sino-Japanese war of 1894-1895 and the October Revolution.”¹¹ It can be said that it was the result of getting bogged down chronically in the theory of “Challenge-Response”.

Fourth, internal development theory.

Essentially, this theory belongs to the theoretical standpoints of “nationalism.” Works of Korean literary history since the 1970s show that many of them have stressed the uniqueness of their own country in order to separate themselves from other literatures, especially Chinese literature. Recently, this notion has already been questioned by Korean scholars such as Paek Nakch’ōng 白樂晴 and Ch’oe Wōnsik 崔

⁹ Paul A. Cohen, trans. by Liu Nannan 劉楠楠, *Zouguo liangbian de lu: Wode Zhongguo lishixuejia zhi lu* 走過兩遍的路：我的中國歷史學家之旅 (*A Path Twice Traveled: My Journey as a Historian of China*) (Hong Kong: The Chinese University of Hong Kong Press, 2021), pp. 63–64.

¹⁰ Mizoguchi Yūzō 溝口雄三, trans. by Sun Junyue 孫軍悅, *Zuowei fangfa de Zhongguo* 作為方法的中國, (Beijing: Shenghuo dushu xinzhi sanlian shudian, 2011), p. 131.

¹¹ Liu Zaifu, *Li Zehou meixue gailun: Dui Mizoguchi Yūzō Yazhou biaoshu de zhiyi* 李澤厚美學概論·對溝口雄三亞洲表述的質疑 (Hong Kong: Tiandi tushu youxian gongsi, 2010), p. 175.

元植. Choe Wönsik exclaimed that “he was astonished at Korea’s ignorance about China and Japan.”¹² In China’s academia, modelling on western scholarship or defying the differences was considered as indifference to East Asia. A Korean scholar Paek Yöngsö 白永瑞 raised a question: Does “Asia” exist in China? From his point of view, “Chinese scholars were deficient in ‘Asian prospect,’ specially lacking of perspective on China’s position in East Asia.”¹³ A Chinese scholar Sun Ge 孫歌 also pointed out that “to Chinese scholars, it seems like a self-evident question, but it is always treated as an unsettled case, why do we need to discuss East Asia? To scholars from the neighbouring countries of East Asia, this kind of ambiguous attitude of Chinese scholars are regarded as ‘Sinocentrism.’”¹⁴ The blossom of nationalism will lead to the rise of egocentrism, and this mindset diverges from the current main trend – globalization. In this concept, the only qualified admirers and researchers of ethnic literature and art must be native speakers. Daniel Barenboim is a famous musician who said, “in 1920, the German people regarded Beethoven and Brahms as German and it is understandable ... but I felt dislike when they asserted that only Aryans could enjoy Beethoven’s music.”¹⁵ It also existed in Japan, only the Japanese people could truly appreciate and research Japan’s literary art. Therefore, in this century, Japanese scholar named Numano Mitsuyoshi 沼野充義 particularly pointed out that “we always have some kinds of ridiculous thoughts..... or even think that foreigners could never understand the subtlety of Japanese literature.”¹⁶ Hence, he emphasized that in the case of literature, we shouldn’t have a blinkered view and limit literature to “J-literature.” Literature should be “W.”¹⁷ “J-literature” mentioned here refers to Japanese literature, while “W-literature” means world literature. In China, some scholars still argue that foreigners are not qualified for appreciating, researching and judging Chinese literature. From my point of view, this thought is backward and absurd. It is very dangerous if it spreads over the society. Lack of cultural inclusivity easily brings about exclusivism or even xenophobia. Generally, the genocide that was implemented by the Nazi German regime during the World War II had an “anti-Jew” background. It is difficult to deny that it had no connection with the assertion “only Aryans could enjoy Beethoven’s music” since the twenties of the last century.

¹² Ch’oe Wönsik 崔元植, trans. by Ch’oe Il 崔一, *Wenxue de huigui* 文學的回歸 (Yanbian: Yanbian University Press, 2012), p. 94.

¹³ Paek Yöngsö 白永瑞, *Sixiang dongya: Chaoxian bandao shijiao de lishi yu shijian* 思想東亞—朝鮮半島視角的歷史與實踐 (Beijing: Shenghuo dushu xinzhi sanlian shudian, 2011), p. 115.

¹⁴ Sun Ge 孫歌, *Women weishenme yao tan dongya: Zhuangkuang zhong de zhengzhi yu lishi* 我們為什麼要談東亞—狀況中的政治與歷史 (Beijing: Shenghuo dushu xinzhi sanlian shudian, 2011), p. 27.

¹⁵ Ara Guzelimian, ed., trans. by Yang Ji 楊冀, *Pingxing yu diaogui* 平行與吊詭 (Beijing: Shenghuo dushu xinzhi sanlian shudian, 2015), pp. 10–11.

¹⁶ Numano Mitsuyoshi, ed., trans. by Wang Feng 王鳳 and Shi Jun 石俊, *Dongda jiaoshou shijie wenxue jiangyi* 東大教授世界文學講義 (Hangzhou: Zhejiang wenyi chubanshe, 2021), v. 1, p. 163.

¹⁷ Numano, *Dongda jiaoshou shijie wenxue jiangyi*, v. 1, p. 56.

With regard to the shortcomings mentioned above, I have introduced “Sinosphere as a methodology”¹⁸ in 2009 and endeavoured to put it into practice. Also, I have published two books, namely *Zuo wei fangfa de Han wenhua quan* 作為方法的漢文化圈 (*Reading the Sinosphere as the Methodology for Studying the Sinosphere*, 2011) and *Dongya Han wenxue yanjiu de fangfa yu shijian* 東亞漢文學研究的方法與實踐 (*Methodologies and Practices of the Study on East Asian Sinographic Literature*, 2011; The Korean version was translated by Sim Kyōngho 沈慶昊 and published by Korea University Press in 2018). “Reading the Sinosphere as the methodology for studying the Sinosphere” emphasizes on an integration of main melody and polyphony. Without “main melody”, there will be no “Sino” sphere; Without “polyphony”, there will be no Sino “sphere.” Scholars should be conscious of the prominent and unstressed aspects when carrying out research on a particular issue. Thus, it could avoid generalization and get rid of the extension of cultural imperialism, also open the closed circle of nationalism.

Reading the Sinosphere as a methodology aims to provide an interpretative framework for a specific cultural phenomenon and expects to discover new meanings from those confusing cultural phenomena. All methodologies contain some kinds of standpoints. The standpoint of “Reading the Sinosphere as a methodology” is: first, viewing Sinographic literatures in East Asia as a whole and not deliberating questions based on a country or a region; second, beginning from the interior part of East Asia and investigating the differences and similarities between China and East Asian countries; third, paying attention to the interrelationships of the interior and outer parts of East Asia particularly, not just emphasizing on “Eurocentrism,” “Sinocentrism” or “Ethnocentrism.”

On the basis of Sinographic words, Sinoshpere has been gradually formed since Han dynasty, until the late 19th century. There are different opinions in academia about the existence of East Asia as a community of shared civilizations before the 20th century. One is to view the world of East Asia as a whole, such as Nishijima Sadao 西嶋定生 (1919-1998) revealed the contents concerning Sinographic culture, Confucianism, Ritsuryō codes 律令制 and Buddhism, as a symbol of an unified East Asian world.¹⁹ An American scholar William Theodore de Bary asserted East Asian as a whole in *East Asian Civilizations* and considered China, Japan and Korean peninsula as “representatives of shared civilizations in East Asia which allowed the reduplication of shared tradition as well as the preservation of local cultures.”²⁰

¹⁸ I have written two articles on this issue: Zhang Bowei 張伯偉, “Zuowei fangfa de Han wenhua quan” 作為方法的漢文化圈, *Zhongguo wenhua* 中國文化, no. 2 (2009); and “Zaitan zuowei fangfa de Han wenhua quan” 再談作為方法的漢文化圈, *Wenxue yichan* 文學遺產, no. 2 (2014).

¹⁹ Nishijima Sadao 西嶋定生, “Higashi Ajia sekai to sappō taisei” 東アジア世界と冊封體制 in *Nishijima Sadao Higashi Ajia-shi ronshū* 西嶋定生東アジア史論集, vol. 3 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2002), v. 3, pp. 61–94.

²⁰ William Theodore de Bary, trans. by He Zhaowu 何兆武 and He Bing 何冰, *Dongya wenming* 東亞文明 (Nanjing: Jiangsu renmin chubanshe, 2012), p. 1.

According to Rhoads Murphey (1919-2012), this unified community continues up to now. He points out that “Even though there are some differences in East Asia in terms of materials and cultures, obviously it is viewed as a whole as the commonality is greater than the individuality. It is the biggest cultural and economic community in the world.”²¹ In addition, some argue that East Asia has been a multi-polar region and thus shared identity that never existed in all ages. Ge Zhaoguang 葛兆光 mentions “there is no China after the 17th century,” “if there was any shared identity of East Asia it was probably before the mid-17th century.”²² Some states this disintegration beginning from Tang dynasty, such as in Wang Zhenping’s 王貞平 work *Tang China in Multi-Polar Asia: A History of Diplomacy and War*. The title of the book reveals that East Asia has already been a “multi-polar” world during the Tang dynasty. It is possible to find out some facts and records in history for supporting the opinions mentioned above. It has been workable in historical phenomena, “Everything remains the same when seeing things from an unchanging perspective” or “When viewing things from a changing perspective, nothing can remain unchanged.” Therefore, it will lead to different results, and it is not exclusive to East Asia. In the case of the west, countless confrontations have existed in many different aspects such as religion, politics, art, morals and etiquette; But it can be viewed as a whole if looking at it from another angle. Europe is disunited in terms of politics, but a European cultural integrity has been formed. It has been called Christian civilization since the Middle Ages. It can be regarded as a sort of common consensus. The European Union was established in 1993 (Europäische Union in German or Union européenne in French). It resulted in the implementation of European integration. This cross-border community of sovereign countries and the related politics and economics are Europe’s contribution to the future of world civilization. It is based on the same cultural “origins,” namely “the culture of Europe.” In 2012, the European Union won a Nobel Peace Prize, which was a recognition for its contribution to human civilization. Diversity should not be excluded when talking about integrity, while homogeneity cannot be neglected when discussing differences. The strength for cohering East Asia in the past was not by politics, economics or military, but by Sinosphere. Pursuing Sinosphere as the best civilization was their common goal and thus confirmed its core value and brought about the formation of unity until the late 19th century. And until today, the ‘root’ of the East Asian culture still widely exists in civil societies.

Here, I want to talk about my personal experience through the aspects of phenomena and experiences: When I was in Korea twenty years ago, I had visited the former residence of a prominent Confucian scholar during the late Chosŏn period named Yi Hang-no 李恒老. The residence are managed by his descendants of the maternal lineage and the surname is also Chang 張. He asked me a question when he

²¹ Rhoads Murphey, trans. by Lin Zhen 林震, *Dongya shi* 東亞史, 4th ed., “Qianyan” 前言 (Beijing: Shijie tushu chubanshe Beijing gongshe, 2012), p. 23.

²² Ge Zhaoguang, *Zhai zi Zhongguo: Chongjian youguan “Zhongguo” de lishi lunshu* 宅茲中國：重建有關“中國”的歷史論述 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2011), p. 166.

saw me: Who was the most famous Chang in history? Then he answered that it's Zhang Zai 張載 of the Song 宋 dynasty. Zhang Zai has four old sayings, which were regarded as "Four Sentences of Hengqu" 橫渠四句教 – "To ordain conscience for heaven and earth. To secure life and fortune for the people. To continue lost teachings for past sages. To establish peace for all future generations." They represent Chinese Confucian scholars' ideal life, magnanimity and knowledge. The image of a Chinese Confucian scholar eight hundred years ago has still been remembered in the heart of the Korean people. It shows that East Asian people have the same 'root' of a shared culture, does it not?

If we agree about a Sinosphere's existence in the history of East Asia (or named the world of East Asia, civilization of East Asia, circle of Sinograph), so we have reasons to consider it as a research subject, a unit that can be employed as an interrelated organism for deliberations and narrations. The basic carrier of that cultural sphere is Sinograph. Over a long period of time, a large number of Sinographic texts have been accumulated showing many similar spiritual values. Consequently, it resulted in a long-lasting cohesive force. This "literary community" of knowledge and culture or "republic of literature and art" was not consolidated. But in fact, there is a strong spiritual tie that links them together. Voices are diverse in this kind of community or republic, which is "polyphonic" or even "heteroglossic." If the research methodology is the counterpart of the research subject, then, the ideas from "Reading the Sinosphere as the methodology for studying the Sinosphere" would be suitable for the research subjects.

This idea also started to emerge in European and American academia, some scholars point out: There is Department of East Asia in the west, but no "East Asian studies." Therefore, it made a demand for researching Sinographic literatures in East Asia (in a broad sense) as a whole. On the practical level, the emergence of an academic breakthrough was limited due to the habitude of various research modes in the past. In 2007, by reviewing current literature on East Asian studies David C. Kang summarized it into two main characteristics, which are actually two major defects. First, it is extremely rare to "study East Asia as a whole and reveal the interaction patterns and similarities and differences among countries in a wider range." Second, "majority of studies show a strong tendency towards nationalist historiography," and this tendency is "unusually prominent."²³ In my opinion, in addition to the two major drawbacks mentioned above, even if some works had overcome the above tendencies, their academic practicability caused by their methodologies is still unable to get rid of the superposition of various countries' historical phenomena. Hence, it became the third major defect. Allow me to use literary studies as another example.

The Columbia History of Chinese Literature (2001), edited by Victor H. Mair, has three chapters at the end of Part 7, "Popular and Peripheral Manifestations," which discuss the reception of Chinese literature in Korea, Japan and Vietnam. However, the writing style is like that of bibliography, listing some names and works, and the cases

²³ Kang, *Xifang zhiqian de Dongya*, p. 2.

of the dissemination and influence of the bilateral relations between China and another countries (Korea, Japan or Vietnam) presented to be juxtaposed and superimposed to each other. Although Fujii Shōzō's 藤井省三 *Chūgokugo-ken bungakushi* 中國語圈文學史 (2011) seemed to be based on cultural circles, it only describes the literary phenomena of Mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan as well as the translation of Haruki Murakami's 村上春樹 works still juxtaposing and repeating several historical facts. This writing method intentionally or unintentionally has followed the world history model that of the 19th century, which has failed to respond to the new wave of "global history" research.

I proposed "Reading the Sinosphere as the methodology for studying the Sinosphere," roughly contains several key points: first, viewing literatures in the Sinosphere as a whole regardless of categories and countries. If the "similarity" is equal to Sinosphere's "major similarity," distinguishing them from other cultural circles; If the "difference" is equal to Sinosphere's "minor difference," clearly identifying their characteristics separately. Second, the interior of Sinosphere mainly relies on multidirectional "circulation of literatures" regardless of transculturation and travelling concepts, not on one-way "eastward spread" or "westward flowing." People promote the development and the change of the whole culture through reading books either directly or indirectly, or even by misreading. Third, employing people's inner experiences and spiritual worlds to search goals and eliminate the binary opposition between the centre and the periphery. Also, focusing on interaction and inter-subjectivity in order to face their life. Making a breakthrough in a difficult situation as a starting point with the aim of experimenting on people's pulsebeats behind literatures. Making humanities completely humanized. Fourth, laying stress on the interpretation of cultural meanings and emphasizing diverse fates of different literatures in various contexts. Moreover, paying attention on the integrity and diversity of people's mindset in different regions, different classes, different gender and different time. If "method" can divide into "directionality" and "regularities," "Reading the Sinosphere as the methodology for studying the Sinosphere" reclines more on "directionality" at the present stage. If trying to enrich "regularities," there is a need of exploring literatures of different categories and questions more extensively and concretely. This is a heavy load and a long road. In the practical research areas, the new practical possibilities I has tried exploring belongs more to "regularities." For example, the studies of East Asian travelogues and poetry exchanges 筆談唱和 advocated the "longue durée" (long term) approach and the studies of East Asian book history and intellectual history emphasized "circulation." Studies of the history of Sinographic literature introduced "double reading" 雙重閱讀 and "CD reading method" CD 閱讀法. Also the "form and spirit interchange" 形神互易 model was used to study the changes of East Asian cultural phenomena, refining "literary harmony" 文和 and "literary war" 文戰 models in order to research the differences and similarities of East Asian poetry and diplomacy.

"Reading the Sinosphere as the methodology for studying the Sinosphere" is an idea concerning an academic theory and methodology that synchronizes with the wave

of globalization, which is also a study that shares the same goal with global history. The particularity of nation-states does not hold a dominant position in the studies and writings of global history, and thus cultural sphere probably is a better research methodology. About “globalization,” I have proposed that it should be “plural,” this proposal was mentioned in a work of a German scholar named Jürgen Osterhammel ten years ago.²⁴ However, he merely used the word “plural” to be relative to “singular” with the aim of describing diversity in globalization. While my focus is to compare three different kinds of globalizations.

Tracing from now to the past, to put it simple, first, twenty years’ globalization is economic globalization, whose characteristic is fragility. Second, two hundred years’ globalization is colonial globalization, whose characteristic is peremptoriness. Third, two thousand years’ globalization is ideological globalization, the characteristic of which is civilizational transformation. This globalization related concept was what ancient Chinese proposed. In *Zhou yi* 周易 (*The Book of Changes*), it mentions that “humanities terminates civilization..... the world is reformed through observing humanities.”²⁵ In *Li ji* 禮記 (*The Book of Rites*), it states “when the great principle prevails, the world is a commonwealth shared by all.”²⁶ The third type of globalization is the one we should promote and put into practice, which is the real desire of human. The accomplishment of this globalization is inevitably plural and colourful unlike singular and standard globalization. Based on the spirit – “people do not regard only their own parents as parents, nor do they treat only their own children as children” and “they do not necessarily keep it for their own use, they do not necessarily devote it for their own ends.” Different civilizations can have their own position in the big family of globalization. Nowadays, worldwide economic activities have laid the foundations for globalization, and provided opportunities for different civilizations to contact, exchange, collide and reconcile with each other. Humankind could approach this dream with steadfast steps if putting “ideological globalization” into daily practice. The proposal of “Reading the Sinosphere as the methodology for studying the Sinosphere” is based on an academic perspective, which is same as the direction of the approach mentioned above. Viewing literatures of East Asia as a whole and going beyond the objective of literary studies’ methodologies, which resulted in a complementarity between researches and observations, as well as theories and experiences. And it became a theory and methodology through having a dialogue with western scholarship. We look forward to establishing scholarship of East Asia that is independent but does not isolate from the world of academia.

Translator: Wing Shan Chan, Esme

²⁴ Jürgen Osterhammel, trans. by Chen Jie 陳潔, *Quanqiu shi jianggao* 全球史講稿 (*Die Flughöhe der Adler: Historische Essays zur globalen Gegenwart*) (Beijing: Shangwu yinshuguan, 2021), pp. 9–13.

²⁵ Gao Heng 高亨, *Zhou yi da zhuan jin zhu* 周易大傳今注 (Jinan: Qilu shushe, 1979), p. 226.

²⁶ Wang Meng’ou 王夢鷗, *Li ji jin zhu jin yi* 禮記今註今譯 (Tianjin: Tianjin guji chubanshe, 1987), p. 290.

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