

FROM SINOLOGY TO POST-CHINESENESS:

Intellectual Histories of China,
Chinese People, and Chinese Civilization

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Chih-yu Shih

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Contents

Introduction.....	1
Following the Path of Italian Sinology	16
China in Belgium: From a Religious, Economic and Political Interest to the Development of an Academic Discipline	41
Changes Historical Context about Modern Japan's Cognition on China: A Discussion From the Alame of "Shina".....	54
Indonesian Intellectuals and China: A Brief Introduction.....	62
Hungarian and Polish Sinology – Parallel Lives	71
From Sinology to Contemporary China Studies: The Case of Hong Kong in the Post-war Period	99
The Social Construction of the Realm of the Discipline: Polish Sinology	109
China Studies in the Philippines: Evolution and Challenges	131
China Studies in Contemporary South Asia.....	162
A Project Note on the "Russian Sinology (2008-2015): Results and Prospects	194
Oral History of Chinese Studies in Thailand : A Project Note.....	201
A Comparative Analysis of the Oral History of Vietnamese Scholars on China Studies	210

Introduction

Comparative Intellectual History of China/Chinese Studies: Emerging Post-Chineseness

The intellectual history project, which has been conducted primarily by gathering the individualized oral history of senior scholars who work on China, Chinese civilization, and Chinese people in different parts of the world, has proceeded with the support of various national and private teams since 2005. Although attempting a grand scheme of analysis or even deciding if such a scheme is desirable at all is still premature, comparative analyses using interviews have already produced a significant body of thought, which the present and future generations could reflect on. The current publication assembles a number of possibilities provided by scholars who have actually interviewed their senior colleagues as well as by interviewees who recollect their intellectual growth to enrich the project. Their approaches and concerns vary and overlap with one another in distinct aspects, indicating an evolving agenda of never-ending inspiration. Nevertheless, with the initial problem in mind, which is to discern the mutual constitution of China, China scholars, and China scholarship, the following introduction serves to inductively present the rationales of this publication. The *ex post* notion of post-Chineseness will be its main theme.

I. Scientific and Cultural Studies

The history of knowledge, concept, and idea pertaining to China, the Chinese civilization, and the Chinese people is difficult to track due to the lack of a definable scope, methodology, or even disciplinary identity. The common approach begins with the collection of narratives in a definable scope and deduces from them different patterns to understand the various micro trajectories of

intellectual growth.¹ Another method is content analysis, in which the terms and words in the massive collection of documents are quantified to infer long-term and macro patterns. An alternative approach, which a majority of the current project participants have adopted, is to understand the intellectual personalities as entire life processes connected with the evolution of their communities without any scope definition other than the interviewees' own intellectual identity.² In this context, we treat the production of knowledge as both an anthropological agenda and a cultural studies agenda. We do not merely understand a narrative from the perspective of the sequence of events but also locate the narrative in the historicized contexts of at least three images, namely, China, the community to which intellectuals belong, and our own communities. In other words, the Chinese people selected for study, the intellectuals who study them, and the readers all have their marks on how China and the intellectual history of China studies are represented.

1. Theoretical Intellectual History as Interactive and Social Constructive Processes

In the epistemology of mutual constitution, the knowledge on China has to be both personal and social. The personal interaction between the scholars and the people selected to represent their subject matter is as essential as the larger conditions and contexts where the research is conducted. The interactive approach attends to the nuanced, coincidental, and creative processes of one's research on and in China and the Chinese population, whereas the social constructive approach involves the structure of meanings, the ethos of time, and the conjunctive social expectations to shape and challenge one's choices of audience, research site and subject, and funding request, among others. Accordingly, the constructive mode of production can be institutional and historical, as well as identificational. This constructive process does not always involve the Chinese under study as much as the sited characteristics that contextualize the academic environment of the China scholar. By contrast, interactive knowledge is primarily experiential and personal and intensively dependent on the evolving perception of the Chinese people as one's career proceeds.

1 For example, Stefan Tanaka, *Japan's Orient* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), Chih-yu Shih, Swaran Singh, and Reena Marwah, *On China By India* Joshua **Fugel**, Naito Konan; Liu Hong, On Wang Gengwu...

2 Jin Guantao and Liu Qingfeng

2. Methodological Intellectual History as Encountering, Choice, and Traveling

Three methodic mechanisms emerge at the initial stage of the project—encounter, choice, and the second-order mechanism of traveling—to encourage the scholars of intellectual history to identify specific processes that constitutes the knowledge on China, the Chinese civilization, and the Chinese people. Choice as a processual mechanism refers to what the China scholars decide to or not to take on from their encounter with discursive, topical, ideological and spiritual clues on the one hand, and economic, social, and political forces on the other. Encountering strikes an individual involuntarily, but one's choice requires volition. Together, the two processual mechanisms decide which travels to take and where to travel and what more encounter and choices travels bring forth. Dynamic encountering constantly transpires alongside traveling ideas and agents. Agents travel to prompt the interactive processes, whereas ideas travel to compose the constructed trajectories that give meaning to one's audience. However, these mechanisms do not render any substance to what an individual should exactly seek. Therefore, a fourth mechanism is recently added—re-incurring—to map out the exact mechanisms that enable one's approach to China, the Chinese people, and the Chinese civilization.

3. Analytical Intellectual History as Re-incurring of Chineseness

Re-incurring refers to the conscious recollection of a prior understanding of China for one to trigger a connection or a reconnection with the Chinese people under study, the Chinese people not under study, and/or the non-Chinese people who study China. Re-incurring tackles the representation of China, in which a narrative and an image are required to facilitate communication and self-identification. Two cognitive mechanisms that enable the representation of China are intellectual re-incurring and affective re-incurring. The intellectual mechanism relies on the use of cultural resources and thus demands deliberate recollection, whereas the affective mechanism arises from a cultural memory that can immediately respond in an evaluative or judgmental manner. Without the cognitive mechanisms of re-incurring, China scholars cannot interact sensibly among themselves and with the Chinese people. The research agenda of re-incurring necessarily produces indeterminate combinations of cultural resources and cultural memory according to the contexts

and the choices of the interacting participants and generates differing representations of China, the Chinese people, and the Chinese civilization. These mechanisms indicate the rise of post-Chineseness, which renders everyone different and yet mutually recognizable to one another in his or her own re-incurred Chineseness.

II. Comparative Intellectual History as Post-Chineseness

Post-Chineseness is about one's capacity to incur the process of reconnection and re-identification to represent Chineseness and achieve the recognition of one's possessing Chineseness by those who are to be reconnected. The process is definitely intellectual because it involves an interpretation of Chineseness. It is also certainly affective because it prompts enthusiasm, anxiety, aversion, and other emotions. The study of post-Chineseness aims to collect intellectual mechanisms that support mutual identification as well as self-identification of possessing Chineseness even if Chineseness no longer has a common definition, denominator, or scope. One's existing endeavor, professional as well as social, naturally affects the choice of intellectual mechanisms that reconnect one to Chineseness. How one is inclined to select a mechanism, together with how others induce one to be inclined, influences one's disposition toward one's Chinese counterpart. In other words, post-Chineseness is an agenda of identity strategy, with behavioral consequences. Such an agenda detects how one appropriates one's own situational identity and act, even if inconsistently, in accordance with the strategy and disposition of his or her partner.

Post-Chineseness is a particularly suitable vehicle for an intellectual history project to epistemologically connect, coordinate, and compare its participants—the Chinese people under study, the interviewees who study them, and the interviewers and readers who analyze the interviewees' oral history. The suitability of post-Chineseness is attributable to the fact that the temporal order of narration, which presumably provided subsequent narrators with a certain epistemological advantage to interpret the earlier records, no longer privileges the next narrators. All of the participants at whichever stage of the project exercise a certain combination of post-Chinese mechanisms to make sense of the narratives they analyze and make sense to their imagined audience. All of them achieve epistemological equality because they similarly engage in reconnecting Chineseness with the purpose of being recognized

as Chinese among an audience somewhere, real or imagined.

1. The Insider versus the Outsider

A major dimension of post-Chineseness that repeatedly surfaces in the interviews and analyses is the self-defined position of the narrator as being an insider or an outsider of Chineseness. The narrators can be either interviewees of intellectual history or their interviewers, analysts, and readers. Most Sinologists appear to consciously understand that an inevitable decision has to be made in their intellectual construction—whether to look *from* an imagined Chinese position or to look *into* an imagined Chinese domain. Nevertheless, ambivalence and ambiguity exist in the choice of position. That is, anyone transcending borders, intellectually and territorially alike, could be both an insider and an outsider. Shifting between becoming an insider and becoming an outsider in accordance with who are in the audience, imagined or real, requires adaptation of positioning.

2. The Temporal versus the Sited

A collateral consequence of inescapable positioning is to determine how to identify the subject, be it a physically sited target or an intellectually identifiable target independent of geography. The latter often embraces a temporally oriented conception, but nonetheless evolves within a level of felt tangibility, which has at least certain yet elusive boundaries. Specifically, temporal Chineseness refers to both behavioral and thinking patterns revealed in the conventions and narratives that prepare attitudes and actions perceived as Chinese by both the actors and their interactive partners. Temporal Chineseness can be anywhere as long as its characteristics are recognizable as Chinese. By contrast, sited Chineseness is registered in a discernable body or site, demarcated by a working boundary in legal, residential, or genetic terms, which any actor or his / her interactive partners can unilaterally determine to symbolize their China.

III. Dimensions of Post-Chineseness

From the given analysis, six different types of post-Chineseness, which enable the representation and practice of post-Chineseness to reconnect with others also

practicing post-Chineseness, are induced from the analyses of the chapter authors of this volume.

1. Cultural Chineseness

Those who practice Confucianism or any other perceived Chinese cultural or religious belief system in their daily lives and apply this belief system to their research on Chinese phenomenon are practicing cultural Chineseness. Confucian scholars anywhere who also practice Confucianism in daily lives illustrate this type.

We have not had an entire chapter on Confucian scholars who practice Confucianism in our collection. However, research on this particular type abounds in the literature. Such scholars include historical and contemporary Confucian scholars in greater East Asia. In the following chapters, nonetheless, numerous authors touch on such Chineseness. Le and Doan, for example, introduce Confucian scholars in Vietnam, specifically those who have grown up in the South and have generally inherited the Confucian legacy from the society at large as well as from their own family. Confucian scholars in South Vietnam are predominantly self-learners, in contrast to the institutionally trained scholars in the North. That said, Northern interviewees likewise benefit from their Confucian family tradition and gain confidence later in their career as think tank analysts because they are capable of understanding a rival China or receive lessons on Chinese reform from an internal perspective.

Tanigaki introduces Confucian scholars who have migrated from Northern Chinese institutes during political upheavals. She looks into the university archive to examine the process of installing Confucian programs in Hong Kong. Before and after Hong Kong became the focal point of China watching during the Cold War, the Confucian scholars in exile had been both critical of the revolution and ideology in China for decades and alienated from the colonial lives in Hong Kong. Consequently, a comparison of Taiwanese Confucian scholars is a noteworthy subject in the future as Taiwan has likewise relied on South-comers who symbolized the political legitimacy of the losers of the Chinese Civil War—the Kuomintang. Such an internal cultural perspective provides analytical confidence anywhere and supports policy studies in Vietnam, Hong Kong, and Taiwan. More farther situated are the Confucian scholars in Southeast Asia, particularly those in Malaysia and

Singapore noted by Matsumura, some of whom consider living Sinology as a proper identity of their own condition, academically as well as socially.

2. Experiential Chineseness

Those who mingle with a self-identified Chinese population within a discernable boundary long enough to present, explain, and interpret Chinese lives from the sited viewpoint are practicing experiential Chineseness. Anthropologists, travelers, and migrant scholars illustrate this type.

Although one's living experiences in China do not constitute a major subject of writings, many actually alert their readers to the relevance of such living experiences. Le and Doan, for example, note that the living experiences in China of Northern Sinologists offered them lessons, which are unavailable to Southern self-learners, for future research on China. Both Paternico and Dessen/Matthyssen record the travels of merchants and missionaries who had the opportunities to reside in China for a considerable number of decades, were able to speak the Chinese language, and took on the challenge of making dictionaries. Given that the depth of language capacity was once and initially almost the sole identity of Sinology, living experiences were essential to the representation of China in the early centuries. Goralczyk finds that living experiences are almost always an intrinsic mechanism of knowledge on China. His discussion on studying experiences in China subtly implicates the relevance of experiences in the evolution of one's intellectual depth.

Indeed, outside of this collection, studying experiences have been constantly re-incurred by interviewees of other countries as long as a desire exists to reconnect with their colleagues through a shared past spent in China; such experiences fascinated cohorts from Poland, Czech, Russia, Mongolia, and Italy in the 1950s. When they have a reunion with old friends, primarily Chinese teachers and classmates, after the thawing of the inter-BLOC rivalry in the 1980s, they could imagine how they lived the Chinese way, despite the fact that foreign students of their time received carefully exercised preferential and yet somewhat quarantined treatment. Their intellectual orientations toward China, friendly or not, are dramatically different from the latter generations, who attained their training in the former Soviet Union.

3. Sinological Chineseness

Those who can describe and explain the different functions and values of the Chinese and their own groups' cultural beliefs to the members of each other are practicing Sinological Chineseness. Non-Confucian Sinologists in general and Church Sinologists in particular illustrate this type.

Rudokawska tackles an age-old debate in the Polish circle of China studies, that is, what accounts for the legitimacy of Sinology as a scope of scholarly engagement? One group advocates the language capacity to read deep and understand empathically. Such a capacity is allegedly more important than comparative theory or methodology because the capacity to read, specifically classic literature, and translate its meaning has been conventionally the genuine test of scholarship. In fact, in the Russian Academy of Sciences, Sinologists who gather and analyze information on contemporary China are to some extent trained in this philological tradition. Baba believes that contemporary China studies in Japan owe a good deal to the forefathers who internalized the classics to prepare for sagehood. The ability to appreciate classic literature is to attain a cultural schema that presumably enables one to read a contemporary document between the lines to appreciate those inexpressible messages via the Chinese cultural logic. The report of Golovachev on the oral history project in the Russian Academy of Sciences primarily deals with interviews of this type of Sinologists.

The origin of Sinology comes from the missionaries who mediated between the Confucian and Christian traditions. Paternico, Dessen and Matthyssen note the important contributions of putting together dictionaries as well as translating or interpreting Chinese philosophy, Confucianism in particular, to the tradition of Church Sinology. However, an opposing travel of religious belief and technological knowledge occurred from the West to China, through the translation of the missionaries. Under this circumstance, the foundation of Sinology can be actually more robust to support revival in later years, when the conditions are encouraging. According to Dessen and Matthyssen, outside the Church in Belgium, China studies initially emerged from a dedication to Buddhist studies. Overall, the political ups and downs that triggered the variations in the portrayal of China determine the available room for Sinological service to civilizational exchange to achieve an impact. In general, Sinological Chineseness exists in the literature, and its

contemporary relevance rarely stays within any geographical confinement. In this regard, although Church Sinology has been part of Hong Kong and Taiwanese Chinese studies, its alienation from stance has failed to attain the trust of the similarly alienated authorities at both sites.

4. Ethnic Chineseness

Those who can describe and explain the different functions and values of the nuanced ways of life embedded in a cultural geography that overlaps with a discernable Chinese domain are practicing ethnic Chineseness. Ethnographers tackling overseas Chinese and groups at sites in China illustrate this type.

Those who conduct studies on overseas Chinese are often local scholars of Chinese origin. This situation is particularly true in Singapore and Malaysia. Chineseness in Southeast Asia is almost synonymous to “difference,” suggesting the hybrid characteristics ingrained in the indigenous environment. Both Matsumura and Clemente report such an interest in ethnic self-identification among Chinese Indonesians and Chinese Filipinos. This quest for self-identity requires differentiation from both the indigenous society to establish self-respect and from the Chinese living in China. Thus, the site of scholarship on overseas Chinese and the representation of territorial China are relevant in specifying the research scope. Ethnic Chineseness that features hybridity and difference has to be registered in **sitedness** to allow for an analysis of how different civilizations forge a synergy to make the sited ethnicity differently diverse from others. Nevertheless, Baba discovers a different kind of ethnic Chineseness in Japanese Sinology, in which China is conceived as a narrow civilization to legitimize the making of Mongolia, Tibet, and Manchuria each as a distinctive agenda. As a result, they do not have to face the indigeneity test of a host society.

The aforementioned sited ethnicity among the overseas Chinese communities conveys a type of Chineseness that is between an imagined authentic China and a genuine indigeneity. By contrast, sited ethnicity inside the territory of China, although claimed to be different, does not celebrate in-betweenness. Instead, it has a layered nature, whereas a politically sanctioned shared Chineseness coexists with a sited identity supported by certain distinctive ways of life. Hong Kong endeavors to achieve such a sited Chineseness through the rise of Hong Kong studies,

which, according to Tanigaki, is primarily affiliated with Chinese studies or Asian studies. Both in-between Chineseness and layered Chineseness have to provide a clearly imagined identity to China to clarify their own alleged difference. Creative reconnection is essential to ethnic Chineseness because it must both connect China and simultaneously distinguish it from self-identity. A migrant history, a hybrid ritual, a hidden Chinese surname, a dialect, and an adjusted diet, among others, could all symbolize one's distinctive identity under certain circumstances. The need for physical boundaries to cement such an identity is the channel by which sitedness usually becomes a convenient base for narratives.

5. Civilizational Chineseness

Those who apply their own civilizational standards to identify and evaluate Chinese civilizations, specifically according to their differences, are exercising civilizational Chineseness. Themes that emancipate, demonize, romanticize, patronize, historicize, or merely relativize China illustrate this type.

Marwah and Soni mention civilizational curiosity in their review of China studies in South Asia. Buddhism facilitates the connection between China and South Asia and simultaneously introduces a contrast with other major religions in the region. Familiar but different, the attitude of South Asia toward China slightly resembles that of central Europe; according to Goralczyk, the distance and language of China have both made China a sufficiently remote object of study among central Europeans, who can thus conceive China studies as a journey of discovery of a different object. Paternico consistently finds that Italian Sinologists have had a tendency to project their self-image to the understanding of China so that the more critical ones actually come from those who are confident of the modern development of Italy, whereas the more romantic ones reflect dissatisfaction with Italy. The tendency to enlist one's own standard, whether ill- or well-intended, is ubiquitous. Mongolian Sinology, for example, exhibits considerable curiosity toward the agricultural civilization, from the standpoint of the grassland civilization. Such curiosity could induce either a desire for conquest or an alienation from contacts.

Japan represents a peculiar case. Baba traces back the civilizational degradation of China by Japanese Sinologists to Japan's quest for selfhood. Although cultural Chineseness, as well as scientific Chineseness, has been influential in Japan, its

academics have had a philosophical obsession with a neither-nor position between East and West. The peculiarity most vividly shows in the common reference to Asia or East Asia in nearly all the modern Japanese works on China. From an Asiatic perspective, Japanese narrators could look at China from a distance. Although Asia is a territorial notion, the use of it actually and ironically dissolves China's territoriality so that China becomes a civilization to be absorbed or enhanced by Asia, or Japan, depending on one's perspectives. The understanding of China as an exotic or failing civilization inevitably contributing to the expansion of Japanese, as well as the Western world, in China shows no appreciation for Chinese civilization. Shao collects the Japanese literature on Asia and East Asia and explores the implications for China studies. A major tendency among Japanese scholars is to interpret Asia not as a geography but as a process of constantly becoming something else. This fact testifies to how China could facilitate Japan's transcendence over the limit of space.

6. Scientific Chineseness

Those who rely on a universal scale or policy agenda to compare a discernable Chinese site or body with others to describe and explain the Chinese phenomena are exercising scientific Chineseness. Institutionalists, Marxists, as well as think-tank analysts illustrate this type.

Rudakowska discusses the lack of theory and methodology in Polish Sinology to insinuate the trendy quest for generalization in the social science circle everywhere. Consequently, a comparative framework for treating China as a case is required, and the scope of China would have to be clearly and methodologically defined. Do-hee Kim, whose conference paper is not included in this volume, reflects on a similar division of methodology between humanities and social sciences in Korea. Shao demonstrates that scientific consciousness is clearly present in the Japanese Sinology by showing how, in Japan, post-War research on Asia, the bulk of which is on China, endeavors to connect China to the rest of Asia and compare China with the rest of the world from an area studies viewpoint. Consequently, empirically supported propositions on processes and structures transform Asia as a thinking method and an ideology into a concrete and tangible subject of analysis.

Most vivid sitedness emerges in policy study. Clement explains how contemporary China studies in the Philippines began with international relations and influenced the subsequent research agenda. An interesting contrast exists between Vietnamese and other Southeast Asian scholarship on China in the sense that most Sinologists in Vietnam are not ethnic Chinese. Chinese humanities and ethnicities remain important for the ethnic Chinese intellectuals elsewhere in Indonesia, Singapore, and Malaysia, in addition to the Philippines. In cases where no Confucian tradition prevails, as does in Vietnam, or no significant Chinese population exists, as does in Malaysia, Indonesia, or the Philippines, think-tank scholarship easily prevails to the effect that territorial China as a convenient object makes a necessary image. Marwah and Soni trace the evolution of South-Asian China studies along this characteristic line and reveal that the India factor significantly predominates the think-bank research on the agenda related to China's Foreign polioy. On the one hand, China appears to be a unitary and thus sited actor. On the other hand, empirical and intelligential evidence is essential to the assessment of China's intention, capacity, and options.

Table 1 Inducted Post-Chineseness Divided by Scholars as Subjects and Scholars as Objects

	Subjects Inside	Subjects Between	Subjects Outside
Objects Temporal	Cultural	Sinological	Civilizational
Objects Sited	Experiential	Ethnic	Scientific/Policy

Source: Author

All narrators on China, regardless of their audience, rely on certain cultural resources to trigger emotions and capture the attention of their audience, such as interviewers, readers and colleagues. The list of cultural resources cannot be exhausted. A resource is most effective if it can immediately trigger the recollection of affective memory, even before the actual memory is retrieved. This mechanism is tantamount to the type of response when one's name is called in a crowd, where other uttered sounds have little chance to be picked up. In addition, cultural memory can be either positive or negative, depending on the effect of the trigger on one's self-identity. A reinforcing effect generates enthusiasm, whereas an incompatible effect induces aversion. Designing a future research agenda to determine which

cultural resources best fit certain post-Chinese mechanisms and which types of audience react to certain cultural resources with positive or negative emotions is a challenging task. All audiences can become owners and/or users of cultural resource as long as they are able to enlist them for the sake of reconnection with Chineseness.

VI. Noteworthy Ironies

Few implicit ironies have been noted in the mood of project coordinators and scholars who work on China, Chinese history and civilization, Chinese people, and/or China in the world. Among others, the following few are worth noting.

1. Sinologists, including Paternico, Dessen and Matthyssen, Goralczyk and Tanigaki, generally realize the significance of the travels of early merchants and missionaries, diplomats, and scholars in facilitating the evolution of the knowledge of Chinese humanities. However, the intention of the emerging generation in the 21st century in using the Chinese language is dubious, as most of them are primarily interested in traveling for business or other practical opportunities in China.

Can the trendy interest in the Chinese language or professional traveling contribute to the evolution of future Sinology in the same way as what it had done a millennium ago?

2. Seemingly shallow China studies in some intellectual communities actually flourish in significantly indigenous Chinese neighborhoods, whose citizenship generates different perspectives of China, which are unfamiliar to experts. Tiong (whose conference paper is not included in this volume) reveals the situation in which a local ethnic Chinese population already acquires a sense of familiarity with Chineseness. Matsumura further cites a perplexing observation that the think-tank's attitude, mainly positive, toward China contradicts with the society's discrimination against indigenous Chinese. Tanigaki also alludes to such a division; however, the negative rather than positive attitude toward China exists in the intelligence research through China watching.

What are the effects of the practices of indigenous Chinese population and their studies on China, Chinese civilization, and Chinese people on the entire orientation toward China as an imagined concrete object?