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COMPARATIVE INTELLECTUAL HISTORY OF CHINA STUDIES: Micro-identity and Macro-civilization

This article will introduce a transnational project, entitled Comparative Epistemology of China studies, the project's rationale, stage of development, and methodology. The project is a response to the postmodern call for reflexive scholarship and rides upon a resurgent interest in civilizational politics. However, its focus is on individual adaptation to and agency for change. The approach to intellectual history is anthropological. The project treats the production of knowledge as a human phenomenon, evolving between one's choices of identity strategy and one's encounter with various larger forces, contexts, and relationships, discursively as well as socially. The project conceives of an individualized intellectual history critical of mechanisms of civilizational evolution and exchange.

The project, which includes an oral-history component and a curriculum component leading to the writing of MA and PhD dissertations, encompasses the study of intellectual history embedded in civilizational and international politics. The hosts of the project are the Research and Educational Center for China Studies and Cross-Taiwan Strait Relations in the Department of Political Science at National Taiwan University. Funded with a grant from the Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation in 2004, it rose out of a pilot project in Japan under the leadership of Professor Hirano Ken'ichirō 平野健一郎 with the support of his colleagues Naka-

mura Yūjirō 中村雄二郎 and Tsuchida Akio 土田哲夫. Now funded by the National Science Council of Taiwan, the College of Social Science at National Taiwan University, and the Graduate Institute of Political Science at National Sun Yatsen University, along with a number of other smaller grants, the project has continued through 2012 and will remain ongoing thereafter.

The project has generated over 100 interviews with institutional and individual participants all over the world (including 7 American, 3 Australian, 9 Czech, 4 German, 4 Hong Kong/Macau, 19 Indian, 18 Japanese, 16 Korean, 3 Mongolian, 16 Russian, 5 Singaporean, 18 Taiwanese, and 10 Vietnamese scholars), over 50 monographs, and a number of periodical articles. In addition to the interviews conducted by members of the Japanese pilot project, individual coordinators in Korea, Australia, China, Germany, Hong Kong, Mongolia, Taiwan, and Singapore and Chinese scholars dwelling in a few national communities, more interviews on intellectual history of national and international Sinology are being jointly conducted via partnerships with the Association for Asia Scholars in New Delhi, the Institute of China Studies at the Vietnamese Academy of Sciences, Ho Chi-minh City University of Social Sciences and Humanities, the Institutes of Oriental Studies and Far Eastern Studies at the Russian Academy of Sciences, the Center of East Asian Studies at Charles University, and the Department of Chinese Studies at Warsaw University. The Center for Foreign China Studies at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences has provided a wide range of technical support throughout. An expanded agenda has begun in Russia, Japan, and Taiwan and will begin in Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Poland, Belgium, and sporadically in Germany in 2012, and hopefully in Italy in 2013. We should also express here the grief we felt at the loss during the project's first 8 years of Mizoguchi Yūzō 溝口雄三 from Tokyo, Lidia Ivanovna Golovatcheva, Oleg Borisovich Rakhmanin, Nadezhda Vinogradova, and Yury M. Garushyantz from Moscow, Buu Cam and Nguyen Ton Nhan from Ho Chi Minh City, and Mira Sinha Bhattacharjea and V. P. Dutt from New Delhi, all interviewees, and Vladimir Ganshin from Moscow, a coordinator and interviewer in the Russian project.

Several workshops explore various possibilities of comparative agendas, one appropriately dealing with a comparison of China studies in Japan and Korea. Contrasts among the "border scholarship" of Korea, Mongolia, Taiwan, and Hong Kong are also under scrutiny. Transitional scholarship in post-socialist communities such as Russia, the Czech Republic, Poland, Vietnam, and Mongolia promises to be fascinating. Nascent democracies of Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Mongolia, the Czech Republic,

Taiwan, and Korea could be compared on how narratives on China have changed in the process of political change there. The combination and recombination of ideological and civilizational sources and the historical, institutional, and social practices of these possible agendas provide a rich repertoire of how the mutual constitution of Sinology, Sinologists, and their Sinic world has proceeded through individual career paths. This project thus contributes to the development of an anthropological interpretation of social knowledge as well as a humanities-based foundation for understanding international relations regarding views on China. Three books are or will be published from the Japanese, Indian, and Russian oral history projects during 2011–2012 [Hirano et al. 2011; Shih, Singh, and Marwah 2012; Golovachev 2011].

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PROJECT

The return of the topic of civilization to the field of international relations has been forceful. The phenomenon of Sinicization that affects China and the rest of the world in multiple directions requires a deeper understanding of the historical and cultural trajectories characterizing the intellectual history of Sinology, in order to avoid a one-sided reaction to Chinese developments. The image of "China rising" dominates headlines everywhere; however, China as objective reality becomes increasingly obscure due to the fact that exchange and interaction across territorial China are so intensive that no China watcher (journalist, businessman, scholar, and politician alike) can afford to be outside of China, physically or socially. China watching constitutes self-interrogation. In retrospect, the objectivistic pretension that China watchers observe China from an external, value-free position is untenable. Any scholar's study of China can never be kept independent from his or her own historical and political, even social, conditions. This is why the project considers how China studies contributes to the reproduction and representation of self-understanding everywhere in one way or another, at the micro as well as the macro level.

The project is an intellectual exercise that may effectively deconstruct any fixed images of China embedded in the legacy of the Cold War and the faddism of globalization. With China increasingly becoming a moving identity and Sinicization appearing to prevail in the current century, the world needs a self-reflective mode of understanding it, in order to avoid overly investing in specific perspectives with specific dispositions that usually lead to self-alienation.

Epistemological issues do not usually attract much discussion in the

China Studies community. Sporadic reflections in this regard, nonetheless, have raised a few challenges that are worth serious examination. Earlier challenges were primarily concerned with the relationship between area studies and social science. Recently, debates have arisen over the relationship between scholars and their objects of study, vaguely considered to represent China. Suggesting an inevitable connection between scholarship and politics, this latter type of debate questions the legitimacy of the problematiqué of mainstream social science as well as area studies agendas. While the academic community has yet to systematically respond to any of these epistemological critiques, pressure for such a response continues to mount for those who endeavor to promote social science in area studies.

First of all, there is the cultural studies perspective that rocks the Cartesian certainty upon which scientific knowledge is thought to be based. Interpreted meaning is substituted for universal theory, becoming the new focus of scholarship in cultural studies. Despite its various and diverse analytical interests and approaches, the field of cultural studies has developed a minimal consensus that almost all share; specifically, a common focus on identity. Cultural studies research whose epistemology seeks to deconstruct knowledge conceives its agenda as no more than another text to reproduce or invent identities desired by the concerned scholars. Secondly, it happens that, at the same time, cultural studies accuses the social sciences of being essentially political construction, while the national identity composition of China scholars is witnessing drastic changes, with more overseas Chinese social scientists joining the Anglophone China studies community. This development makes the discussion on the ethical relationship among China scholars, China scholarship, and China itself increasingly pressing. Finally, globalization, which is bringing scholars and those carrying the China identity in and out of China more and more frequently, further obscures the border of China that scientists used to assume to be "just out there." Once China as an object of research is opened up, the mutual constitution of related scholars and scholarship cannot be easily hidden any longer.

Interaction among the identities of China, China scholars, and China scholarship together casts doubt on the validity of knowledge in scientific communities. In brief, the challenge is that if knowledge is at the same time an identity statement of those who produce the knowledge, does this not mean that past research, which presumes the objectivity of China knowledge, should all be disposed as sheer product of identity politics? Or, is it that knowledge is still knowledge, except that it is not universal, law-driven, or time-neutral? This is not the first time a challenge of this

sort has appeared in China studies. Earlier denouncements of area studies as counter-productive from the social science community once threatened to discredit the kind of research on China that was not oriented toward universal theory building. However, that earlier challenge was largely methodological and did not touch upon the identity issue that intrinsically links scholars to the scholarship. This ontological reconceptualization has prompted some responses from the social science community, but has not yet led to similar reflection in either Sinology or China studies.

The challenge is also about research design. How could scholars, after recognizing their subjective intervention into the production of knowledge through the problematiqué that motivates their research, feel comfortable about the result that to some extent responds to their own identity needs, consciously felt or not? This recognition means that one's scholarship represents at best truth relative to that of another. Scholarship is therefore more than a representation of truth. It is at the same time text which reveals the scholars' own inner world. Scholars end up examining China, while readers end up examining the scholarship.

Indeed, the social science community has responded to the cultural studies challenges in various ways. The result is by no means encouraging, in the sense that the two epistemologies find no ready platform to engage in dialogue. Similar challenges appear in China studies indirectly, mostly not presented in epistemological terms. As these epistemological and ontological challenges question the moral foundation for research in the China studies community, the need for a framework that can deal with knowledge of a completely different nature seems present and urgent. Without such a framework, possible mutual estrangement among scholars of different identities will no doubt negatively affect the process of learning, as well as the quality of intellectual exercise. A framework that is epistemologically tolerant enough to bring together scholarship based upon different philosophies of knowledge can provide an ethical relationship among different varieties of knowledge. The oral history approach that contextualizes and individualizes scholarship provides a base for the participants to engage reflexively in an anthropology of knowledge that can lead to such a framework.

ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

Underpinning our oral history project is the conviction that individual intellectual trajectories necessarily reflect choices, conscious as well as subconscious, over epistemological possibilities allowed by social condi-

tions over which individuals have no immediate choice. Two mechanisms
that facilitate intellectual growth are first, an encounter with the exist-
ing epistemological perspectives beyond one's own volition, and second,
the choice that strategically selects, recombines, and renovates perceived
(im)possibilities. The mechanism of encountering constrains the range of
intellectual puzzles [Harding 1998; Diesing 2005; Stehr and Meja 2005];
the mechanism of choice reflects the strength of volition [Phye 1997:52,
110; Stanley 2005; Stalnaker 2008]. Whereas encountering is largely so-
cially prepared and yet unavoidably mediated by coincidence, choice is
indicated by the existence of alternatives which the differing decisions
and narratives of others are either enacted or discussed. Between one's
choice and encountering, which is beyond one's own choice, there is
the second-ordered mechanism of traveling, both conceived in terms of
physical movement and career path. Traveling always involves choices
that facilitate the encountering that ensues; hence, it is a second-ordered
mechanism that breeds individual intellectual growth.

The present project invites reflections on various trajectories of in-
tellectual history pertaining specifically to how China is accessed through
knowledge of China in different communities and life biographies. Given
the world's multiple identities, one's self-understanding is essential to
one's understanding of China. Decisions made upon ever evolving indi-
vidual biography challenges the objectivity of knowledge [Diesing 1991;
Latham 2000]. The knowledge of China and the practices associated with
the name of China complement one another in China as well as elsewhere
[He 2011:257–77; Wu 2011:279–97]. The evolution of China knowledge
proceeds through trajectories of intellectual growth, each embedded in
its own social practices. This is particularly pertinent in the age of glo-
balization and amidst the arguable "age of China rising." As symbols of
China fill in one's life practices, the China scholar's approach to its study
increasingly interferes with his or her self-understanding.

The study of individualized intellectual history regarding China is
therefore at the same time an anthropological study of knowledge. China
involves the process of the self-becoming of its scholars and their com-
munities, and is thus composed intrinsically of a phenomenon of human
evolution. Historical bearings of one's social and cultural background
comprise the epistemological foundation of one's writings on China. They
incorporate various biographies that have given rise to unusually rich but
often mutually incompatible intellectual resources and inspirations, in-
cluding, at the very least, the collective memory of all those groups with
which one has sequentially identified oneself throughout one's life. In
my own birthplace, Taiwan, for example, these historical bearings refer

particularly to political and social movements launched and wars fought in the name of, or targeted at, China and the associated political upheavals that caused social cleavages, political disarrays, ideological confusion, and, at times, anti-foreign, anti-colonial, or anti-Chinese nationalism.

China scholarship in Taiwan, for example, involves choices by scholars with respect to encountered and constantly reinterpreted imaginations of how China's names, identities, and images are incurred. Due to its colonial history, Civil and Cold War legacies, and internal cleavages, China scholarship in Taiwan consists of strategic shifting among the Japanese, American, and Chinese approaches to the subject, as well as their combination and recombination. The mechanism of choice, including the traveling that can orient, reorient, and disorient existing views on China, produces conjunctive scholarship. The rich repertoire of views on China challenge, together with the politics of identity, the objectivistic stance of the social sciences to the extent that no view of China could be exempt from political implications and politicized social scrutiny [Shih 2011]. Concerns over exigent propriety in a social setting are internal to knowledge production. Therefore, understanding the process by which all the historically derived approaches inform China scholarship in Taiwan through the mechanism of encountering reveals both the uncertain nature of knowledge, in general, and the uncertain meanings associated with China worldwide, in particular.

Specifically, the present project encourages readers of the oral history results to track the identities and associated practices of academics. Their careers and intellectual evolution and the simplifications and complexifications in their work offer latecomers a window into the existing understanding of identities and practices in the Sinic world. Careers are not representative in any way, but they do illustrate well the possibilities that structures provide for self-reflexive agents to make meaningful choices and thus to shape, at least to some extent, their environments, without ever fully determining them. These academics illustrate with particular clarity the liminal positions they occupy between China and their own continents of Asia, Europe, America, Africa, or Australia, and between East and West. Their lives and work thus illustrate Sinicization as a set of multi-directional, multi-sited, discursive processes, including variants of de-, re-, and self-Sinicization. In short, Sinology presupposes agency and the appropriation and re-appropriation of Chinese phenomena by Chinese and non-Chinese academics for their self- and group-interested use at multiple sites.

These academics illustrate in their lives a variety of geographical, linguistic, and temporal possibilities. They were born into different national

communities, they lived and worked in different countries, and their oc-
casional reliance on languages other than their professional languages
teaches their readers that Sinicization does not have to proceed in either
Chinese or English. Rather, the use of third languages can be a statement
of who one is, from where one comes, and where one is heading. In brief,
Sinicization reveals in one individual the existence of multiple cultur-
al-geographical selves. Later in their careers, many experienced a rising
concern over their home countries, often reflected in a shift happening,
consciously and rationally, in their academic and political agendas and
frequency of visits. This fact is a healthy antidote to the common pre-
conception that structures are all-determining. As these individual lives
show, nothing could be further from the truth.

Even far-reaching views that seek to associate China with very spe-
cific images, such as "rise," "all under heaven," or "Chinese characteris-
tics," represent choices, not inevitabilities; however, the lives and work of
these academics contradict any such notion. If one insists on the nation-
state as the only viable civilizational actor in world politics, Huntingto-
nian clashes of civilizations may have some plausibility. Academics living
and working in transnational careers, however, have been free to choose
practices unrelated, even resistant to, the constraints and opportunities
that nation-states impose and provide. Promotion or denial of Chinese
distinctiveness always involves choices. Thus, no view on China can be
politically neutral. Sinicization is unavoidably shaped and impacted by
conceptions of identity and political practice.

This does not mean that actors have full control over their scholarly
work on China or over the self-identifications that implicitly or explicitly
inform their perspectives. No academic could have controlled either the
larger forces that prompted his or her civilizational encounters, or the
liminal positions they have held.[1] Their choice of language, for example,
would not go unnoticed by one community or the other. Home and host
countries posed structural constraints simply because they differed from
one another. Any narrative strategy about China could not help but acti-
vate those differences. Yet, meaningful choices persisted, including both
the choosing of sides and avoiding the choosing of sides. Structural de-
terminacy thus fails to remove the capacity for strategic indeterminacy.
Adaptation, and even self-revocation, is the norm of biography.

Discursive analysis shows that these academics consciously manage
their liminal positions through scholarship. In their work on China, we
see at least two common puzzles that call for answers. How do they place
themselves in the Sinic world? That is, does China belong to an identical
or a different ontological order? How do they want China to be evaluated?

That is, should China conform to a Western standard expressed in values that are claimed to be universal?

Encounter and choice are the mechanisms that define agency. Sinicization is premised upon encounters between Chinese and other civilizations. Encounters push agents to adapt, as they must choose between resistance, teaching, learning, or a combination of all three. Consciously or not, each agent is constantly involved in choosing different strategies of adaptation. If encounters can generate fresh possibilities for innovation and re-combination, Sinicization is endlessly multi-sited. In processes of cross-civilizational encounters, no two agents will adapt their practices in exactly the same way. And although such encounters are occurring all over the world because of the size of China's population and its peaceful rise, Sinicization is gaining increasing significance.

REWORLDING CHINA AND THE MULTI-SITEDNESS OF SINICIZATION

The phrase "China rising" gives the impression of an expanding Chinese sphere of influence or Sinicization. The meaning of Sinicization is complicated, multidimensional, and contested. It refers to conceptions of self and other that are typically deeply intertwined. The practices it represents, discursive and otherwise, can signify either the broadening or the narrowing of social and cultural distances. Many of the developments that are currently shaping the contemporary world, such as globalization, capitalism, nationalism, and multiculturalism, provide the context in which China encounters and engages both East and West. The information on the lives and scholarship of individuals collected by the present project clearly reflects the complexity of these processes.

The intellectual reconstruction of China in its various guises, involving self and other, is about influence and interaction among people as much as states [Callahan 2004:39, 45]; viz., the Chinese and their self-understanding as much as China and its sphere of influence, and China and its diaspora conceived of beyond the category of territorial China. Moreover, Sinicization focuses our attention on those mediating between China and the world. Consumers of goods made in China, Taiwanese pro-independence advocates, Chinese villagers fighting for socioeconomic and human rights, and indigenous Chinese loyal to Southeast Asian states can all act as cultural brokers involved in processes of encounter, engagement, and clash between different civilizational complexes. Sinicization is a concept that summarizes important processes leading to self-discovery

and self-interpretation. Without it, the economic, security, and political dimensions of Sinology are devoid of meaning.

Individualized intellectual history describes processes of civilizational evolution. These processes adapt both internal needs and external contacts with various agents who substantially, though not fully, share worldviews, values, self-understanding, and life practices. Appropriating knowledgeable practices across civilizational boundaries encourages adaptation. The contemporary study of China thus rests on the readiness of its students to conceptualize and practice new ways of self-understanding.

Specifically, the oral history phase of the present project presents multiple sites of China studies that de/reconstruct the Sinic world order through the worlding and reworlding of historical subjectivities in various sites so that China rising in the 21st century contains no fixed destiny for post-Socialist, Asianist, religious (Christian, Islamic, Tibetan, or Indian) civilizational politics and international relations. By showing multiple possibilities of remapping the past or the present Sinic world order, the contending formulations of what China is appearing in the mainstream English, Japanese, Russian, and Chinese research literature can each find their own place in specific historical contexts, enabling students of Sinology to appreciate how China studies and China scholars are mutually constituted, as are the Sinic world order and China scholarship.

For contemporary social scientists outside of North America or Western Europe, pretending that an objective China exists may be a departure from imperialist history, its associated civilizing burden, and its unwarranted sense of superiority. Presumably, a social scientist no longer has to be obsessed with the backward identity of China or feel responsible for its remedy. However, the seemingly natural, normal objectivism in European and North American social science is neither natural nor neutral once the nascent Asian intellectual reflections on politics of knowledge, especially knowledge regarding China studies as area studies, is put in perspective. The civilizational embedding of scientism actually inspires the American and West European elite to take the objectivist approach, rendering their own civilizational past ostensibly irrelevant. This explains why a return to civilizational consciousness becomes an epistemological prescription to the compulsive obsessive drive for objectivism that, incidentally, exposes the political nature of social science.

China's many colonized neighbors can no longer appreciate the objectivists' discourse. Their otherwise insignificant choices, meaningless to the mainstream research literature, nevertheless compose a variety of creative worlding possibilities. Under their quest for subjectivities from within the Sinic world order, what used to define the Sinic world order—

for example, the tribute system, Daoist philosophy, ethnic kinship, political territorial sovereignty, and so on—no longer holds true or is no longer practical. However, this finding does not mean that these neighbors coordinate in these deconstructive exercises or that deconstruction is incompatible with nascent Sinicization. For the majority of Korean thinkers, for example, a Korean historical trajectory exists outside the Sinic world order, which bore the burden of the tribute system through its various vicissitudes. In turn, for the majority of Mongolian thinkers, a Mongolian historical trajectory exists independently over a vast territory, which the Yuan dynasty at best turned into a sub-empire, foreshadowing the eventual reunification of a great Mongolian nationality. On the other hand, a small group of Vietnamese Sinological veterans hold tightly to their Sinic identity to support a distinctive national position, while deterritorialized Chinese Southeast Asian scholars greatly undermine any attempt at a centered arbitration of Chineseness.

Multi-sited reinterpretations of the Sinic order challenge the singular text of "China rising" as well as the "Chinese threat" and points to a different intellectual history and, ultimately, a different view of global international relations. China rising has already generated multi-sited understandings both inside and outside China's territorial borders. Chongqing, the leading municipal region in Central China that has been consciously developing a China model in contrast to the Western model, parallels, in a manner of speaking, Canton, which deliberately combines liberalization and one-party rule. Before top Chongqing leadership was purged for criminal deeds on different matters, both are under capable leaders with both confidence and vision, and an eye on each other. One not need mention the age-old competition between Shanghai and Beijing or any other smaller, allegedly "unique" sites attempting to approach socialist reform in their own ways. Further challenges come from other sites, such as Tibet, Xinjiang, Hong Kong, and Taiwan, where the borders of China's turn increasingly obscure not only territorially, but socially and politically, as well. A transition from one Chinese territorial site to another usually demands a distinctive understanding of what China is. How China is continuously becoming another China is therefore contingent upon how each site, as low as individual households and as high as national regimes, acts upon its own historical trajectory. Neighboring nations certainly join in this constant process of becoming part of "China rising" and China becoming part of their own becoming. Borders and sites multiplying in this complicated manner almost certainly undermine high politics in the imagery produced by the conventional international relations research literature. Among possible sites are, however, the long-ignored Socialist

sites and their presocialist trajectories.

Sites are where identity strategies emerge. The multiple Sinic orders arising from various sites, which appear to belong to overriding Sinic order, reflect different identity strategies that meet within their interaction. These strategies derived from different historical trajectories construct their own China out of the mechanism of encountering and choice. Through encountering, each site is constrained by the physical and discursive contexts from which its strategies emerge; through choice, each site combines and recombines cultural resources to give meaning. This is how no site can monopolize the meaning of the Sinic order. All sites are able to come up with new or recycle old meanings. The Sinic order ironically survives in name or imagination, if not in substance, as all strategies interact and adapt continuously.

Sinicization has enhanced the vitality and resonance of the intellectual history of Sinology. It has facilitated the spread of American market capitalist practices within China's economy, nationalism and rights rhetoric within Chinese politics, the idea of "balance of power" within China's foreign policy, and multi-culturalism within China's global diasporic communities. Conceptual and institutional adaptations to Sinicization and the different forms of resistance, re-appropriation, and feedback they engender have made Sinicization more important. All responses push agents to be cognizant of the positions they occupy between different civilizations, and all require knowledge of both the Euro-American and Chinese forms of civilization. Invariably, academics as agents of Sinicization cannot do without the use of English, which has unavoidable ideological, practical, and institutional consequences. Sinicization, as well as Sinology, often implies not only China as a nation-state, but also the Chinese residing in Indochina and Taiwan who mediate between the Chinese and their own various forms of identity. They act as both producers and consumers of civilization who maneuver among collective, familial, and individual centers of allegiance. Self-knowledge is the foundation of Sinology. Becoming a Sinologist involves multi-sited processes that deconstruct stereotypical notions of China's rise in the twenty-first century. Our interviewees have actively participated in Sinicization. Their strategic choices are shaped by their specific historical contexts, and their adaptations thus vary widely. Since they are positioned at different sites, these agents do not respond in a similar manner to China's rise.

JAPAN

The Japanese oral history we collected yields the earliest results of the project. How to be a nation-state has remained a constant puzzle for the Chinese as well as Japanese civilizations since the arrival of modernity in East Asia. The solution used to be one of learning, understanding, and self-transformation. Only when the mission of transformation evolves into one of assertion do the two civilizations realize that the ultimate challenge still lies ahead. This is the first global moment at which the two nation-states appear on the world stage as global powers. For Japan, the global moment occurred at the turn of the century, emerging victoriously from the 1895 war on China and the 1905 war with Russia. China's moment transpired almost a century later after the dramatic year of 1997, which witnessed the demise of its last revolutionary leader Deng Xiaoping, the vindication of colonial shame through the transfer of Hong Kong to PRC sovereignty, the final completion of socialist thought revision, and a triumphant survival of the Asian financial crisis. It is at their global moments that these two states, together with other actors on the world stage that had to engage their rise, were forced to decide on the ultimate challenge, if their final entry into world politics were to represent a different ontological configuration for international relations dominated by major power politics.

The ultimate challenge is inevitable at the global moment for psychological and political reasons. Psychologically, the past civilizations of East Asia, considered backward during their grand self-transformation, were able to regain their exterior attraction along with the rise of national power. First, there exists the drive to redeem lost self-respect by constructing a positive self-image embedded in the glorious civilizational past. There is conviction that current success of the nation-state to achieve the benefits of world status was enabled by the strength provided by the great civilizational past. Accordingly, there is the urge to demonstrate that the newly acquired status should not be achieved at the sacrifice of extant civilizational traits. However, identity politics that asserts civilizational difference to meet these psychological necessities unavoidably challenges the very meaning of being a nation-state. Both Japan at the beginning of the 20th century and China in the 21st have appeared as threats to international relations due to their civilizational estrangement.

Unlike the historical rise of a national actor that will alter the balance of power in world politics, both Japan and China have avoided such a challenging position by claiming that their entry transcends the balance of power. While nation-states are territorial configurations, many

students of China in Japan, as well as in China by the way, have pains-takingly resorted to assuming a pervasive identity in an undivided space. Thus, becoming powerful among the East Asian states proceeds through civilizational expansion rather than territorial. Furthermore, this civiliza-tional expansion should continue on the premise of incorporating, rather than replacing, existing civilizations. It is the new humanist ethic through which Japan or China contributes to world politics, not a new balance of power. Nevertheless, other students of these nations believe that the real task in practical terms is to request the fair share due for the rising status of their nations in accordance with the existing rules of the game or, alter-natively, to faithfully follow the code of conduct set by earlier major pow-ers. For these latter pundits, civilizations are national resources; they re-define neither the nature of the nation-state nor international relations.

Despite the similar variety in their civilizational approaches to a com-mon challenge, Japan at the beginning of the 20th century and China in the 21st century categorically differ in the actual strategies they employed, discursively as well as physically. On the one hand, for those who regard the two nations as civilizations, their treatment of Asia and Asianism stands out specifically in the difference. Japanese scholars are conscious of their place in the civilizational divide. They eagerly devise an Asia that enables Japan to group Asia and Europe together in its philosophical space of existence. Asia preserves Japan to the extent that the latter can become both Europe and China freely by becoming Asian, so that Asia becomes more universal than any other identity. In contrast, the Chinese imagination of space is an open-ended accommodation of anyone who intends to share Chinese civilization. In short, Japanese civilization ide-ally transcends world politics and survives civilizational divides through its enhanced intellectual capacity to become both. Asia is its conceptual vehicle. By contrast, Chinese civilization accomplishes the same thing by claiming everyone else as being Chinese. Asia is epistemologically redun-dant for Chinese thinkers.

On the other hand, for those who view their nation no more than an entity joining in an existing system and civilizations as being essen-tially territorial rather than transcendental, the challenge is slightly more physical than discursive. In this vein, for the Japanese nation to acquire its fair share and win respect, it must dominate Asia in order to become an equal participant in world politics. The scope of Asia arguably could be as limited as including no more than China and Korea. It could be as extensive as additionally including Southeast and South Asia. In the same vein, Chinese realists and liberals who subscribe to the system of nation-state are not perplexed by the scope of Asia, as they are concerned only

about achieving equality for China's own sovereign domain. How China should prepare for acceptance by the rest of the world is the point of departure in this particular debate.

From the vantage point of the Japanese and Chinese scholars we have surveyed, knowledge of international relations conveys meanings considerably richer than the literature of power politics would allow. The quest for entry by Japan and China is self-defeating in two aspects. On the one hand, entry initially requires self-denial to allow civilizational aliens to evolve into a Eurocentric model of nation-state. However, the point of success at the global moment presents the ultimate challenge to the Eurocentric model, in order to compensate for the loss of self-respect in the process of becoming European. Our Japanese oral history project is intended to reflect on the various ways in which self-understanding is expressed in modern Japan and China. It will continue to elaborate on how knowledge of world politics and international relations, on the one hand, and civilizational self-understanding, on the other, are mutually constituted. It will discuss how theoreticians have discursively devised identity strategies for their group/nation/civilization to survive the ultimate challenges as they have understood them. It will tackle the question of how in specific contexts different scholars re-appropriate civilizational discourses for the sake of their own identity and survival, to the extent that world politics cannot escape from individualized aspiration for meaning and agency for being and/or becoming.

As it currently stands now, the project has completed 14 interviews, among which 10 were gathered in a book published by Heibonsha in June 2011. The first volume of the Chinese version, which came out in October 2011, also contains 10 interviews, 9 of which are translations from the Japanese version. A few other interviews are still being conducted at the time of the writing of this article, and the second Chinese version is expected in 2013. The interviews give the impression that individualized encountering and choice together frame the development of intellectual history at the micro level. Experiences from the defeat in WWII vividly remain in the memories of many interviewees; however, those experiences do not seem to have impacted their later entry into the field of China studies. Similarly, the Chinese socialist revolution of 1949 does not appear to have been an influential component to their lives as teenagers. The decision to study Chinese in college was idiosyncratic, but also functional to their eventual careers in Sinology. In comparison, the Cultural Revolution attracted the attention of a good many who had already chosen Sinology as their research specialty. At which point each individual began to feel alienated from the Cultural Revolution was a matter

of personal judgment and view of Japan. Some did remain sympathetic to some extent, though. In addition, how to regard China studies in the United States required conscious deliberation at times.

Methodologically, a vague division between social science and area studies appears to parallel the familiar division found in US academics. However, exploring the meaning of Asia among Japanese Sinologists finds at best a weak echo of their American or European counterparts. A political thought foundation that supports one's scholarly inquiry of China, while hardly motivating for American China experts, is not unusual among our Japanese interviewees. In Japan, this political thought foundation can carry with it a positive attitude toward China, from which the social science approach often exempts its practitioners. In either case, investigation is considered essential to a proper understanding of China among all interviewees. Friendship and social connections in China are mentioned across the board, while a cynical view of the Chinese Communist government can be detected in some interviews. Reliance on theoretical abstraction is partial, and there are proclivities to both sensitize details and dabble in long-term speculation.

NOTES

1   One version of the mix of these larger forces includes realism, idealism, Confucianism, and Islamism [Wang 2008]. Another version is Korea between China and Japan, socialism and capitalism, and East and West [Kim and Hodges 2006].

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