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World History and Chinese History: 20th Century Chinese Historiography between Universality and Particularity*

Introduction

Only two years after the turn of the century, Liang Qichao (梁启超, 1873-1929) wrote his well-known article „New Historiography“ (新史学) which up until today is regarded as one of the first and certainly the most influential critique of traditional Chinese historiography. At the same time, this article is also regarded as a foundation for a new way of writing history in China. Liang wrote this pamphlet while exiled to Japan where the former supporter of constitutionalism had turned into an ardent admirer of Western thought. Historiography was to help China transforming itself into a nation, strong by its internal coherence and ability to face the challenge of Western Great Powers. The modern nation state, so the basic idea of this article, needed a modern form of historiography bestowing the past with meaning and unifying the people by a shared understanding of history. A sense of solidarity based on a shared understanding of history was to form the basis for democracy.

However, Liang Qichao's new historiography was not only aimed at rewriting Chinese history into the history of a nation state, it was also aimed at redefining China's position in the world. Liang's new historiography is a new way of linking Chinese history to world history. Without the context of world history, China's position in the world could not be defined which is why from the very beginning Liang Qichao's new historiography needed the world history context. (Schneider 1997, Tang Xiaobing 1996, Zarrow 2002)

During the course of the 19th century, China had lost its dominant position in East Asia. No longer could the Chinese elite claim that China was at the center of what was called “everything under heaven” (天下). During the Opium Wars, the Chinese Empire had been

defeated by the British Empire and other European countries. Western colonialism had taken over most of the countries surrounding China and had thereby destroyed the central position of China in the tributary system of international relations in East Asia. The Empire in the Chinese sense of the word had already vanished long before the Qing had stepped down. And China was no longer the world or “all under heaven”, but only one nation among the nations of the world. (Levenson 1958-1965, Osterhammel 1989, Weigelin-Schwiedrzik 2004) Under these conditions, the new historiography as advocated by Liang Qichao was a national historiography as well as a form of world historiography. It defined the consensus of the Chinese people on Chinese history, and it defined China’s position in the world.

As China was faced with the loss of its central position in East Asia and in the world, the Chinese intellectual elites looked for a possibility to replace it by something else that China could be confident and proud of. They developed the idea of China’s particularity. While China was certainly one of the poorest countries of the world, it was at least special and different from all the other countries. By its particularity, China was different from all other members of the international community, and by its difference it could claim to define the terms of competition between itself and the rest of the world. One way of dealing with this problem was to define moral values as superior to material well being. Many Chinese scholars of the late 19th and early 20th century looked at the world from this point of view and therefore came to the following conclusion. Even if China could not take a leading position among the nations if measured by its economic strength and the material well being of its people, it could at least claim moral superiority. The motivation behind this kind of positioning was first and foremost the idea that if China could no longer regard itself as the center of the world it could at least strive to occupy a leading position among the nations. As long as it could not fulfil this wish in material terms, it could at least claim moral superiority based on the idea that progress is initiated by moral standards rather than by material desires.

The nation is always both particular and universal. It is by its ethos part of the international community and thereby part of universality, but at the same time, it has to be different from the other nations and therefore claim particularity. (Habermas 1989, 254) In this sense, China is not different from the rest of the world, and national historiography in China is part and parcel of the overall endeavour of finding the particular in the universal and the universal in the particular. Recent discussions in China show how under the challenge of globalization, Chinese history and its relation to world history is still under debate. Many arguments that are exchanged in this debate originate from the late 19th and early 20th century, and all attempts to come to a conclusion on this issue that have been launched during the course of the 20th

century seem not to have surpassed the level of sophistication reached in the first round of discussion. Up until today, there is no version of world history in China that could be read without the context of Chinese history, and Chinese history is written with an inherent link to world history. Although this close relationship is more often implicit than explicit, it reminds us of the fact that the writing of world history is still part and parcel of national historiography. (Osterhammel 2001)

Liang Qichao and Zhang Taiyan and the problem of universality versus particularity in Chinese history

During his life, Liang Qichao found three modes of tackling the problem of universality and particularity in Chinese history. In the period before the Hundred Day Reform of 1898 (戊戌变法), he was a loyal disciple of Kang Youwei (康有为, 1858-1927) who had designed a new universalistic world order in his book “On great harmony” (大同书). According to Kang Youwei, China should not regard itself as different and particular, it should rather be the center of an alternative universality. As part of the New Text School tradition (今文学派), Kang Youwei developed an idea of the future based on the Gongyang Commentary (公羊传) interpreting Confucius as a reformer. In his view Confucius had not interpreted the past in his “Spring and Autumn Annals” but had, as a matter of fact, designed a future for China in three steps. The third stage, the epoch of Great Harmony, had not yet been reached. It was to be reached in the future when the whole world would be united in an international society ruled by morality and solidarity among the people. With the idea of Great Harmony rooted in Chinese tradition and spreading out far beyond its borders China would be the center of this world. Quite obviously, Kang Youwei’s new idea was a continuation of the traditional Chinese world view under the conditions of an emerging modernity in China.

After the defeat of the 100 Day Reform, Liang Qichao had to leave the country and went to seek shelter in Japan. It was in Japan that he started taking a keen interest in Western thought. As a consequence, he learned that the model according to which industrialization had taken place in Europe was universal while China was lagging behind. The West was the new center of Liang’s thought and Liang’s world, and China did no longer have the force to radiate its ideas throughout the world. On the contrary, it was the West which radiated its ideas and models so successfully that China could not help but adapt these ideas. Instead of thinking in terms of Great Harmony about the relationship between the nations of the world, Liang realized that competition was the main ingredient of international relations. Like many other

scholars of his time, he adopted the idea of social Darwinism to understanding international relations. In this context, China was at the verge of losing its right of existence, but still had the chance to prove its ability to catch up with the very top if only it could show its willingness to learn from the West as Japan had done so successfully. (Levenson 1958-1965) By the end of World War I and Liang's journey to Europe, this hope was destroyed. Liang saw the destruction of Europe with his own eyes, and his conversations with Western intellectuals convinced him that China should not copy the European model of industrialization. The solution he found for the last part of his life was a combination of West and East. According to Liang, a new universality should be based on what had proven to be of advantage from among the Western and the Eastern traditions. The West had generated science, and the East needed the analytical and scientific mode of thought in order to progress. However, the East had generated a morality which the West was lacking. This morality should be part of the new universality, and thereby East and West would combine and complement each other in their joint search for a new universality. Neither the West nor the East could be successful without borrowing from the Other, both had to cope with a deficit that could only be overcome by learning from the Other. In this context, world history would be the history of growing mutual respect and understanding, of improvement by mutual completion. (Tang Xiaobing 1996, Weigelin-Schwiedrzik 2005a)

Even though Liang Qichao went through several changes in the course of his life, he always remained loyal to the New Text School of thought. And even though he stressed in his autobiography that he turned against his former teacher Kang Youwei, he never turned against the basic concepts of the New Text School. (梁启超: 清代学术概论) As part of this school of thought he was more interested in understanding the universal than the particular, and his three modes of tackling the relationship between the universal and the particular were all focused on finding a position for China within the universal rather than unilaterally stressing its particularity.

Zhang Taiyan (章太炎, also Zhang Binglin 章炳麟, 1868-1936) was a representative of the Old Text School (古文学派) and in many respects a counterpart to Liang Qichao. He was interested in what Liang Qichao neglected, but at the same time, he was just as much as Liang Qichao one of the founders of China's new historiography exerting an enormous influence on this field. (Mittag 2005) He was focused on finding the particular in Chinese history and in writing Chinese history as "the development of a particular people in a particular place" (Tang Xiaobing 1996). For him, history was the place where the Chinese people could find its particularity as history was the emanation of what he called national essence, something every

people and nation of the world was supposed to possess. A nation could only become aware of itself if it knew about its own history and by this become aware of its own particularity. However, this essence cannot be explained by borrowing from other countries' theories and methods. The particularity of history could only be understood by a particular set of theories and methods generated from this particular history. As this was true for all countries in the world, universality in this concept was to be understood as the universal validity of the theory of particularity. Universality was the sameness of being different. (Schneider 1997, 73-82; Mittag 2005). World history therefore was the sum of particular histories of nations and peoples.

During the later development of historiography in China, Liang Qichao has always been of major importance for historians focussing on the necessity to link Chinese history to world history and to prove that Chinese history developed basically according to the same ideas, models and rules as the history of other nations. As in the case of Liang Qichao, this form of writing history for China has always been rooted in New Text School thought. Zhang Taiyan and the Old Text School, on the other hand, have ever since inspired historians regarding Chinese history as particular, and the particularity of Chinese history as the basis of the collective identity of the Chinese nation.

Chinese Historiography during the 1920s and 1930s

Starting from the late 1920s, Marxism and with it historical materialism entered the scene. Although Marxism by its own self definition is a theory claiming universal applicability, Chinese Marxist did not unanimously subscribe to this idea but split into different schools of thought just as their non-Marxist counterparts did. That is why, no matter whether they were Marxist or non-Marxist, Chinese historians of the 1920s and 1930s basically followed three modes of resolving the relationship between the universal and the particular. They either focused on the idea that Chinese history followed the same line as history in every other place of the world or they tried to prove that Chinese history was fundamentally different from the history of other nations. Only very few continued to explore the possibility of relating the particular to the universal in the sense Zhang Taiyan had established by viewing world history as the sum of particular histories or in finding some other solution that would be more complicated than either searching for the universal or the particular.

During the 1920s and 1930s, Chinese intellectuals continued to be extremely interested in discussing Western thought and its applicability to China. Much in contrast to their European

colleagues who up until today believe that they can understand the world without knowing too much about Asia, intellectuals in China competed with each other in getting acquainted with European philosophy and intellectual history. Most of them fell into the trap of what is regarded as self-orientalism today. They forgot their traditional way of looking at Chinese history and only knew how to explain the history of their country the way non-Chinese historians had done so. Both Marxists and non-Marxists regarded Chinese history as lagging behind the European model, but only Marxist historians claimed that catching up with the European model could at the same time mean “overtaking” European capitalism by establishing socialism in China.

The discussion started by evaluating the role of Confucianism in Chinese history. Those who stuck to the European model of world history claimed that Confucianism was the main obstacle in thriving for progress and therefore had to be overcome. For those, however, who favoured a particularistic view on Chinese history, Confucianism was the most important proof for Chinese history following its own path. Historians like Wu Mi (吴宓, 1894-1978) and Mei Guangdi (梅光迪, 1880-1945) were among those labelled conservative and arguing in favour of a particularistic view. They developed the idea that China had its own history as well as its own modernity and have ever since influenced Marxist and non-Marxist searches for an alternative modernity in China. They used the magazine “Xueheng” (学衡) as their platform in struggling with the group of intellectuals trying to gain dominance over the discourse on the basis of the cultural capital they had accumulated as leading members of the New Cultural and May Fourth Movements (1915-1921).

Fu Sinian (傅斯年, 1856-1962), one of the most prominent leaders of the May Fourth movement who later did not turn Marxist, had developed iconoclastic ideas already before 1919 and argued that “Chinese thought was basically rotten, demanding that Western logic and science, especially experimental methods, had to replace it immediately” (Schneider 1997, 149). According to Fu, Western thought was focused on facts, while Chinese thought was oriented towards traditional ideals and could not escape the past. However, this outmoded way of looking at things could be overcome as Chinese scholars had developed methods similar to what was used in western science. Text criticism (考证) which had dominated historiography during the Qing (清) dynasty (1644-1912) was a sign for him that China could easily enter the world of scientific universalism. Qing learning was based on the ideas of objectivity, empiricism and induction. It stood for scientific proof and was based on doubt in the tradition. With this argument, Fu followed the path designed by ardent supporters of China’s Westernization, but at the same time, he found a solution for the threat of China

loosing its own identity by solely copying from the West. China had started moving into the direction of scientific thought already before the West had entered China, which is why China had shown its ability and inclination for joining scientific universalism before its unfortunate encounter with the West. It was part of China's own development to join the world of scientific universalism and not an impingement imposed on China from the outside.

For Fu, it was science which formed the core idea of universalism. China did not lag behind the West because of its economic and social deficiencies. China lagged behind the West in terms of science. Catching up with the West meant catching up with Western science, and this meant getting rid of moralism as the basis of China's self esteem and replacing it by a fact oriented way of finding the truth and a proof based form of argument. In the context of historiography, this meant that Chinese history did not have to be understood in terms of the European model of development in order to become part of world history, Chinese history could be all different from European history and still be part of a form of world history the understanding of which was generated from a scientific methodology used everywhere in the world. This is how Fu Sinian tried to overcome self-orientalism and claim equality for Chinese history. However, as Axel Schneider rightly argues, "this is [also] the point where Fu's universalism becomes part of a nationalistic project. Unable to define an affirmative stand towards Chinese history except for by relating to the history of science, Fu wanted to rehabilitate China by integrating it into a universal development of scientific thought which viewed all nations as potentially equal". (Schneider 1997, 216)

During the discussion on "the character of Chinese society" (关于中国社会性质论战, Leutner, 1982, Dirlik, 1978), Guo Moruo (郭沫若, 1892-1978) distinguished himself as a Marxist universalist, albeit with an argument quite different from Fu's. Guo claimed to be able to prove that the idea of society developing in five ensuing stages could be applied to China. He did this as part of the newly founded CCP's attempt to rebut the argument that socialism was an inadequate political vision for China and an import from Russia which would destroy China's particularity just as much as any other import from the West. By heavily relying on oracle bone inscriptions (甲骨文) that had just been deciphered Guo Moruo proved that China had gone through a stage of slave society before entering feudalism. By this argument he claimed to be able to show that China had gone through the same stages of social development as the Western countries and that therefore socialism was an option for China that was based on science. The discussion came to a halt after the 6th party congress of the CCP which took place in Moscow and was focused on rebutting Trozkyism and the theory of an Asiatic mode of production. The decision against the Asiatic mode of production

which the party took on this occasion was a decision against claiming particularity for Chinese society.

This discussion shows that the solution on how to deal with the relationship between particularity and universality in Chinese history can be found on different levels of abstraction. Whereas Fu Sinian established universality on the level of scientific methodology, Guo Moruo identified it on the level of structural similarities in social development. As China, according to Guo Moruo, went through the same development as the rest of the world, it did not have to deplore a deficiency in comparison to the West, but was only lagging behind in terms of time. The difference between the stage of development reached in China and the more advanced countries of the world could be overcome by accelerating the pace of development.

Chen Yinke (陈寅恪, also Chen Yinque, 1890-1969) was among his generation of historians the one who most prominently advocated the idea of particularity in Chinese history. Like Fu Sinian, he had studied in Germany for quite some time, spoke many foreign languages and was extremely interested in exploring the influence of foreign cultures on China. However, this cosmopolitan inclination did not hinder him from exploring the particularity of Chinese history. He borrowed from the conservatives of the May Fourth Movement the idea that history was the core of the national essence every nation possessed in one form or the other. The basis of Chinese particularity was, according to Chen, Confucianism and its way of handling the social relationships according to the principal of “three basic principles and five rules” (三纲五常) of behaviour. In terms of this particular tradition China was equal to every other nation with their respective traditions. There was, just as Zhang Taiyan had put it earlier on, no ranking among nations. (Schneider 1997) In this sense Chinese history was universal because it was particular.

Among Marxist historians, it was Jian Bozan (翦伯赞, 1898-1969) who opted at a comparatively early point for a more particularistic view on Chinese history by developing his theory of combining the abstract with the concrete. During the early 1930s, he advocated the use of history in the context of fostering patriotism among the Chinese people with the aim of mobilising them against the Japanese invasion. (Leutner 1978, Leutner 1982, Dirlik 1978) For this reason, Marxist historians had to write their histories more as stories than as theoretical treatises on the principles of social development, he argued. People should be proud of the history of their own country and should be able to relate to important leaders as well as events in establishing their collective identity through history. As a matter of fact, he followed the line that had been established in the Soviet Union facing war with Nazi Germany. There the

so called “sociologization” of history had been criticized and replaced by a more fact oriented form of historiography in order to help young people be proud about their own country and its history. However, Jian Bozan soon met with criticism as he hit the difficulty that the more fact oriented form of historiography he advocated tended to re-legitimize traditional Chinese historiography. It could tell a good story, but it could not explain history and bestow history with a meaning that surpassed the logic of the story. In order to avoid this problem, Jian stressed that historiography needed facts and theories, Marxism and Chinese history, or to word it according to our terminology: it needed particularity and universality. Jian Bozan did not explain on which level of abstraction he wanted for particularity to conform to universality, but he made quite clear that Chinese history could deviate from many concrete explanations given by Marxist historical materialism and still conform to Marxism on a higher level of abstraction. In this sense, his writings of the 1930s were the beginning of a discussion among Marxist historians in China about how theoretical principles (论) should be applied to writing Chinese history (史), and this always meant that even among Marxist historians the relationship between Chinese history and world history was under debate. (Weigelin-Schwiedrzik 2005, Weigelin-Schwiedrzik 1996a)

The Sinification of Marxism and the Beginning of Maoist Historiography

During the war against Japan, the Communist Party of China had established a so called united front (统一战线) with the Guomindang (国民党). The party used this situation to enlarge its mass basis, collect weapons and get prepared for its later seizure of power ideologically and organisationally. As part of its ideological preparation, the party leadership under Mao Zedong (毛泽东, 1893-1976) launched the Yan’an rectification campaign (延安整风运动)(Apter, Saich 1994) and the idea of “combining the general principles of Marxism-Leninism with the concrete practice of the Chinese revolution” as the key to developing a victorious strategy for the CCP. According to this new wording, the general could only be true if shown in practice to be successful which meant that Marxism-Leninism was only universal in so far as it fitted reality in China and led the CCP to victory. Mao Zedong Thought (毛泽东思想) included those parts of Marxism-Leninism as universal which could be successfully applied to leading the Chinese revolution to victory, and Mao Zedong Thought was at the same time the example showing how Marxism-Leninism helped to analyse the situation in China without hindering the party to deal with the Chinese particularities it had to cope with

in order to gain the support of the people in China. Mao earned his charisma not only by designing a victorious strategy, he also won acclaim by explaining history in terms that allowed for China to be part of the universal and yet preserve its particularity.

Fan Wenlan (范文澜, 1893-1969) was Mao's most prominent adviser in the field of Chinese historiography during the time of the Yan'an rectification campaign and the first author of a Marxist version on China's history since the middle of the 19th century (中国近代史, 上册). Mao's text on "The Chinese Communist Party and the Chinese Revolution" (中国革命与中国共产党, Mao Zedong 1939) put down the main lines of interpretation relying heavily on Guo Moruo's interpretation from the 1920s and reiterating the idea that China had basically developed according the same line as the more advanced countries of the West. However, he also tried to explain why and when China deviated from this pattern by blaming imperialism and their accomplices in China, the comprador bourgeoisie, to have made a development of capitalist society in China impossible. The Communist Party had to fulfil the aim of history by getting rid of imperialist rule over China and getting China back on track. Had China not been attacked by imperialist countries, it would have by itself developed capitalism and thus have laid the foundation for a future socialist revolution. The reason for China having deviated from the normal course of development was not to be found in the particularity of Chinese tradition or in some other kind of inherent otherness. It was due to external forces forcing China into a situation which did not allow for it to follow the course of world history. Politically, Mao Zedong designed "new democracy" (新民主主义) as a stage which fulfilled the needs of both capitalist construction and a future socialist society. This "domesticated" form of capitalism should help China accelerate its development and achieve within the shortest possible period of time for what the Western countries had taken 100 years (Mao Zedong 1940).

In this context, the particularity of Chinese history was a deviation caused by imperialism, China's deficit in terms of development could be healed by getting rid of imperialist rule and by running through an accelerated period of social development which would finally lead China back to the universal pattern of social development and to those nations of the world that stood by its social progress at the very top of the ranking. In order to overcome China's deviation from the universal, particular methods had to be applied that so far no Communist party in no other country of the world had used. With this idea, Mao drew onto a repertoire of arguments which had been forwarded already during a very early stage of discussing Marxism among Chinese intellectuals. Early Chinese Marxist had argued on the basis of what they had learned about Marxism in Japan that China was most apt to become socialist among all

countries of the world. (Bernal 1976, Weigelin-Schwiedrzik 1998) Although much in contrast to what Marx had held China never experienced class struggle it would achieve socialism earlier than other countries as Confucianism allowed for finding a consensus among the people on the most perfect way of organizing society. Societies in the West could not go this way as they had always been torn apart by class struggle and therefore needed a violent revolution to establish a socialist society. In this argument, China's particularity in the form of Confucianism did not inhibit China from being part of a universal development. On the contrary, this particularity prepared China for a leading position among the nations. While non-Marxist intellectuals of the late 19th century longed for China being able to gain a leading position among the nations as compensation for the loss of the center position in the empire, Marxist intellectuals replaced the "all under heaven" idea by the possibility for China to take over a pole position among the most advanced and progressively organized societies.

However, from a Marxist point of view, China did not only deviate from the normal pattern because of lagging behind in developing capitalism, it also differed from what Marx had envisioned as the path toward socialism with regard to peasants being the majority of the population. Guo Moruo had established the idea that China had been a feudal country ever since the first unification in 221bc. Why did it not advance to capitalism at an earlier time if it was among the first to reach the stage of feudalism? Was this long period of feudalism not a sign of a Chinese particularity with China's social development stagnating instead of heading towards the next stage of development? Mao tried to find an answer to these disturbing questions by attesting progressiveness to the peasants who had time and again pushed China forward by their peasant revolts. However, he stayed within the framework of orthodox Marxism by underlining that peasant revolts could only induce change within the system and not lead to overcoming the system without the support of social classes able to take over the lead of the to be newly established society. (Mao Zedong 1939, 1940) With the CCP an organization had come into existence that was able to lead the future socialist society and thereby contribute to healing yet another deficit of Chinese society.

By these interpretations, Mao Zedong had remoulded Marxism so that it would not only fit the particularity of China but also the CCP's claim for power. The sinification of Marxism-Leninism (马列主义的中国化) (Leutner 1978) was for him a strategy that had its power center in Yan'an rather than in Moscow and a strategy that would lead the CCP to victory. Historians that later on tried to write Chinese history used Mao's ideas about sinification as a legitimation for their belief in the particularity of Chinese history. Mao had established himself as a guarantor for China's particularity through the Yan'an rectification campaign, but

at the same time, his ideas established a link between China and the world and were extremely attractive for all those who were in search of a newly defined leading position for China in the international community (Weigelin-Schwiedrzik 1996a).

Writing world history in the People's Republic of China

After the founding of the PRC, non-Marxist voices in historiography very soon started to fall silent. However, the three different modes of tackling the problem of universality and particularity in history did not disappear. From the 1950s up until the Cultural Revolution the competition among Marxist historians of either particularistic or universalistic inclinations was comparatively fierce, and the question who dominated whom in this competition remained unresolved. Even when during the Cultural Revolution most of those historians who had advocated a particularistic orientation were persecuted and dismissed from office, those who replaced them did not dare to opt for a unilaterally universalistic option and integrated particularism into their theoretical considerations. (Weigelin-Schwiedrzik 2006) The idea that peasant revolts had pushed Chinese history forward was a Maoist idea that had first been propagated during the Yan'an rectification campaign, the Maoists of the Cultural Revolution brought this idea forward against their adversaries who had argued that the ruling elite in China had made progress possible through its policy of compromise with the peasants. Both sides held that their ideas were a proof for Chinese history differing from the Marxist view on world history, both claimed that their ideas were compatible with Mao Zedong Thought, and nevertheless, the political climate of the 1960s made them into uncompromising enemies. Later on, the so called leftists who had always had more of an inclination towards universalism turned openly particularistic when they came up with the idea that Chinese history derived its dynamics from inter-elite struggles between Confucianists and Legalists (儒法斗争史). (Wang Gungwu 1975, Weigelin-Schwiedrzik 1996) Even though this struggle was what they called a reflection of the on going class struggle in society, the idea was yet another form of underlining the particularity of Chinese history. Quite clearly, since the split with the SU and in times of extreme isolation from the international community, the inner-Chinese discourse on Chinese history was dominated by internal political struggles and the necessity to link Chinese history to world history had nearly vanished.

Although China has been opening up since the introduction of the policy on reform and opening in the late 1970s, the writing of Chinese history is still undertaken in isolation from the outer world. Chinese historians rarely allude to research from outside China, and non-

Chinese research on Chinese history usually does not refer to PRC scholarship. Those young researchers from the PRC which decide to pursue their studies of China from outside China are very often not too interested in historical questions. (Weigelin-Schwiedrzik 2005a) And if they are, they tend to underestimate the necessity to act as a bridge between the scholarship in and outside China. Ironically, the reason for this phenomenon is to be found in the obsession of Chinese historians with the particularity of Chinese history which had grown with the years after the Communist takeover. (Wang 2001, Weigelin-Schwiedrzik 2006) Another reason for this development is the fact that universities and academies in the PRC continued to separate the study of history (i.e. Chinese history) from the study of world history. Separate institutes were founded. Just as in early Republican times, world history and Chinese history was taught in different courses at schools and universities. The journal “Research on World History” (世界史研究) was founded to carry articles in this field while all other historiographical journals refrained from publishing articles that did not relate to Chinese history.(Croizier 1990, Littrup 1989) Only journals that specialised on questions related to the didactics of history (such as 历史教学) carried articles in both fields, albeit to a much lesser degree on world history than on Chinese history. (Croizier 1990, 154-155) With this kind of separation the relationship between Chinese history and world history was organizationally inexistent and therefore no longer a topic of public discussion.

During the 1950s, the model of social development in five stages as imported from the Soviet Union clearly dominated the writing of world history (Wang 2001). The standard volume edited by Zhou Yiliang (周一良, 1913-2001) and Wu Yuqin (吴于廑, 1913-1993)(Zhou Yiliang, Wu Yuqin 1962), published in 1962, nailed down the major categories in compliance with the five-stage-model which were also reiterated in articles and school textbooks of the period before the Cultural Revolution. However with the tightening of tensions between China and the Soviet Union and the accompanying debate on universalism and particularism in the field of Chinese history the field of world history started to deviate from what was regarded as a Soviet imposition and did this in the context of debating the problem of Euro-centrism. (Wang Lincong 2002).

During the first years of the Cultural Revolution, the writing of world history came to a halt, and even though world history was taught at universities and schools to a certain degree, it only regained a certain prominence in the context of China’s politics of modernization and of opening to the international community. Again the problem of Euro-centrism was raised and juxtaposed to the idea of “diversity” (多元论) advocating multiple modernities and China’s own path towards modernization. In this context, a new version of world history was edited

by Wu Yuqin and Qi Shirong (齐世荣, 1926-) (Wu Yuqin, Qi Shirong 1991-1994) advocating the idea of world history being the sum of particular national histories which, as we know, had entered the scene already in the early 20th century.(Xu Lan 2004) Quite in continuation of what Zhang Taiyan and Chen Yinke had proposed, the authors show that nations, countries and regions could only develop and distinguish themselves by communicating with, relating to and exchanging goods and ideas with other nations and regions of the world. They call their approach a combination of a vertical and a horizontal view on history, with the vertical relating to economic progress and the horizontal relating to cultural and other exchanges as well as mutual dependencies. (Yu Pei 2003) In contrast to this dominant position Luo Rongqu (罗荣渠, 1927-1996) argues that modernization is a global phenomenon that has to be looked at from a trans-national and global perspective. (Luo Rongqu 1993)

Ma Keyao (马克尧, 1932-)who wrote his version of world history as a history of civilizations (Ma Keyao 2004) continues the tradition established by Zhou Gucheng (周谷城, 1898-1996) in his book on world history that was published in 1949 already. (Zhou Gucheng 1949) Zhou had been a professor at Fudan University in Shanghai since 1942 teaching world history on the basis of civilizations and world regions. He was also the first to criticise Euro-centrism in the 1960s (Xu Lan 2004) and is therefore held in high esteem up until today. For many younger researchers he is an important orientation as a model of crossing over the lines between history and philosophy, Chinese history and world history as well as between Marxist and non-Marxist historiography.

Recent discussions on world and global history

The relationship between universalism and particularism in Chinese history is still under discussion even in the otherwise separated field of world history. It is part and parcel of the ongoing discussion on world and global history as well as on the problem of Euro-centrism in the writing of world history. The discussion on world history in China is a discussion that cannot be separated from Chinese history, and no organizational separation can deny the obsession of Chinese historians with their own Chinese history (an obsession which they share with most historians of the world!!).

Yu Pei (于沛, 1944-), the vice president of the Institute for World History at the Chinese Academy for Social Sciences (中国社会科学院世界史研究所) in Beijing, argues much in line with the critics of orientalism when he deplores the fact that Chinese history cannot be

explained without using non-Chinese terminology. He opts for writing a Chinese version of world history in which China is regarded as the root and Chinese history is related to world history. He explains the division between Chinese and world history as a problem deriving from the fact that traditional Chinese historiography could not be replaced by a form of world history that would not contradict Chinese history. The traditional cyclical view on history as reflected in dynastic histories was incompatible with the linear view that dominated Western writings on history. Also the traditional way of writing history with China as the center did no longer comply with changing realities. Thus both the writing of Chinese history and the writing of world history had to be changed into the logic of a linear view on history and of a world without China at its center. The result of this was a form of writing Chinese history in non-Chinese terms, and writing world history without a Chinese center. Up until today, says Yu Pei, this problem has not been solved, and China has lost its own way of looking at its own history. This does not mean that Yu Pei is an advocate of anti-globalism. On the contrary, he sees the on going globalization as a good chance for re-writing Chinese and world history by overcoming Euro-centrism and repositioning Chinese history and China proper in a new global context. (Yu Pei 2001, 2003, see also Xu Lan 2004)

Wang Lincong (王林聰) argues that the on going globalization process forces historians into regarding the history of all nations as equal and thereby overcoming the idea that history has to be measured against the European model of development. At the same time, we learn from globalization that all development is interdependent which is why global history has to relate the history of a nation to the region and the history of a region to others regions of the world. Economic, political, cultural and ecological developments are also interdependent and should no longer be looked at as separate from each other and limited to the territory of nation states. While the guiding idea of writing history should be based on the equality of nations, history itself is the history of fighting for dominance and power and a history of a continuous repositioning of center and periphery. (Wang Lincong 2002)

Andre Gunder Frank's books have by now all been translated into Chinese and have incited a lively discussion among historians in the PRC about the transfer of centers from one region of the world to the other. Liu Beicheng (刘北成, 1949-), professor of world history at Qinghua University, holds a critical stand towards Frank's vision of China being the dominant center of the world in the near future. He shows how the Asian Crisis of 1997/1998 hit the region quite badly and made dreams about the future position of Asia in the global context vanish within a very short period of time. However, he does not contradict Frank's analysis

about China's dominant position in world economy before the 19th century and about China's contribution to the industrialization of Europe. (Liu Beicheng 2005)

Only historians who decidedly refer to global rather than world history refrain from constantly alluding to Chinese history. Their aim is to find a universal theory of global history (全球史) based on a new understanding of Marxism. Global history is for them a field that is dominated by Marxism, and historians who publish in this context are nearly the only ones today who openly refer to Marxism and historical materialism. (Wang Lincong 2002)

Conclusion

The above described discussion among Chinese historians about the relationship between Chinese history and world history shows quite clearly that even though the two fields have been separated since a long time they are closely inter-related. However, only quite recently has this idea been discussed explicitly. From the beginning of the 20th century up until very recently, the relationship between Chinese history and world history has remained implicit. It has been more like a subtext to the text than a conscious effort to view Chinese history in the context of world history and vice versa. With China having lost its prominent position in the world as a consequence of the development of international relations during the 19th century, the re-writing of Chinese history, on the one hand, had to give an answer to the miracle of this change and was therefore forced to consider the relationship between Chinese and world history. On the other hand, historians in China have avoided to openly discuss the issue and therefore have refrained from making the relationship between Chinese and world history a subject of open discussion as the loss of the empire was and is regarded as a humiliation and defeat (Cohen 2002).

Instead, no matter whether Marxist or non-Marxist, Chinese historians have camouflaged the problem by discussing the issue of universalism versus particularism in Chinese history. That is why the question of whether or not Chinese history conforms to the history of the rest of the world stands at the very center of the debate on the relationship between Chinese history and world history. Up until recently, the fact that world history and Chinese history were institutionally two separate fields created the impression that world history could be written from a point of view that was detached from Chinese history. However, recent developments show that accompanying China's rising position in the international community the idea that world history should be written from an unveiled Chinese point of view can be openly communicated and the relationship between Chinese and world history made explicit.

The more recent controversy between global and world history is a controversy between the national and the trans-national in the writing of history and a new way of debating the relationship between the universal and the particular in Chinese history. While the idea of a Chinese version of world history strongly reflects nationalistic tendencies among Chinese historians and reveals their longing for an alternative to the European and US American way of looking at the world, the advocates of global history try to re-invent a Marxist approach in the Chinese context that is more akin to Chinese Marxism before sinification. It is the continuation of earlier attempts to focus on the universal rather than the particular, but similar to the world history approach in so far as it is rooted in a critique of Euro-centrism and aimed at defining an alternative universality that could enter the competition with what is regarded as global history from a European and US-American point of view.

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