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The characteristics and trends of historical writing in the People's Republic of China since 1978

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The December 1978 decision at the third plenary session of the eleventh central committee of the Chinese Communist Party to implement reform and opening-up marked an important watershed in historical studies in contemporary China.¹ With this in mind, historical studies in contemporary China can be conveniently subdivided into three periods: the first from the founding of the People's Republic of China to the start of the Cultural Revolution (1949–1966); the Cultural Revolution period (1966–1976); and the third starting with reform and opening-up, or the “new period” (1978 onwards). During the ten years of the Great Cultural Revolution, historical studies in China were seriously distorted as a result of “leftist” tendencies, giving rise to such practices as “innuendo historiography”, i.e., using judgments on historical figures to serve the purposes of current political struggles. Not only were historical standards destroyed or otherwise laid aside, but historical facts were deliberately and comprehensively twisted and altered.

Scholars differ, however, in their assessment of historical studies during the initial 17 years after the founding of New China. Some contend that the situation in this earlier period was identical to that which prevailed during the Cultural Revolution period, arguing that in the earlier period as well, historical study was largely “politicised”, with “the whole research system giving too much, if not exclusive, attention to peasant wars”,² while others affirm that the earlier period laid the basis for the restoration that occurred after reform and opening-up by the training of a host of historical professionals and by the production of a fair number of substantial publications.³ Notwithstanding all the debates concerning continuity or disruption between the two periods, the fact remains that in the first pe-

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riod there were many shortcomings and mistakes, for example widespread dogmatism in terms of methodology, narrowness of scope, blind dismissiveness and repulsion concerning both traditional legacies and western historiographical theories and practices, and so on.⁴ These shortcomings and mistakes are what historians of the reform and opening-up period have been consciously trying to avoid. Accordingly, they exhibit features dramatically different from their predecessors, in both theory and practice, especially in their research objects, methodology and orientation. While it is too soon to declare that these post-1978 historians are “consciously” breaking away from certain historiographical traditions,⁵ their alienation from “past” traditions and their craving for new vistas is nonetheless clear.

Expanding scope: cultural and social histories

Before 1978, as a result of the ruling ideology of the period, historical studies were chiefly preoccupied with the so-called “Five Golden Flowers”: the periodisation of ancient Chinese history; forms of land ownership in feudal China; peasant wars in Chinese feudal society; the roots of capitalism in China; and the formation of the Han nationality.⁶ This monotony of scope was obviously unable to account for the diversity of Chinese experience; instead, it seriously constrained China’s historical studies, to the point of degrading it to pure propaganda. Consequently, with the improved political situation and opening-up in 1978, historians in China began almost immediately to resume their effort to borrow and absorb western historiographical theories and methods, partly to redress past faults. They wished to open up a number of new fields to meet the needs of the time and society. One important manifestation of this has been their turning away from traditional political history and their embrace of cultural and social histories.

The reason why cultural history took the lead in this scope-expanding breakthrough of historical studies is that culture serves to illustrate better than anything else the historical continuity and spiritual contour of a state or nation. Many historians feel that, by starting with China’s cultural traditions, value systems and ways of thinking, they are able not only to give expression to the quintessential qualities of Chinese history, but can also effectively account for the particularity of the Chinese growth path. As a result, the number of publications aiming to offer a comprehensive portrait of traditional Chinese culture, and to illustrate its overall appearance, basic features and pluralistic developments from multiple perspectives, have mushroomed.⁷ Reflecting on the Chinese search for modernity, some historians have sought to use culture as an important category of analysis, hoping to uncover the underlying reasons for China’s slow steps in modernising itself while reevaluating some key components of Chinese traditions, such as Confucianism.⁸ The role of traditions in modern society, the relationship between traditional culture and modernisation, the cultural orientation of a future China, etc., have all become inescapably significant topics for these historians.⁹ The renaissance of cultural history was quickly followed by an outright cultural craze in the 1980s, which in turn helped boost cultural history studies to a new height. Even in 1988, when cultural history was already beginning to decline, almost a thousand cultural history papers were published in academic journals.¹⁰

Entering the 1990s, though, the tide of cultural history slowly ebbed. However, *guoxue*, or national learning, which, conveniently, was an important part of cultural history, rather than cooling down became virtually a new craze. What merits special attention here is that the so-called *guoxue*

craze was essentially different from the preceding cultural history craze, in that cultural history, as it emerged in the years following 1978, was an attempt to examine China's modernisation process by casting a new look at China's cultural traditions with an open mind or even from a radical stance, whereas the *guoxue* craze had obvious culturally conservative or antimodernity features.¹¹ In a sense, the shift from the cultural history craze to the succeeding *guoxue* craze brought with it the loss of an originally "modernist" grand narrative necessary for cultural history research. Admittedly, China is currently stuck in a complex chiasmus between modernity and postmodernity. Modernist culture featuring rationality and progress is facing both an assault from the antimodernistic *guoxue* tendency and the danger of losing itself amid the highly commercialised milieu of contemporary China. This chiasmic state is a marker of the need for cultural history, in this new context, to seek, from below, those cultural variations that will be needed if it is to stage a new rebirth.

In the late 1990s, social history rapidly replaced cultural history as a hot spot of historical concern. Indeed, some scholars have termed the rise of social history a "landmark event" in China's historical studies of the new period.¹² To be sure, there is a tradition of social history in China. As early as the 1920s and 1930s, there emerged in China the so-called "controversy over Chinese social history", presenting itself as a debate over the nature of ancient Chinese society. Yet, in fact, it was an effort to map China's future contour. Conceivably, the revival of social history in the 1990s was different from this, with a manifest ambition to transform the old, narrow and monotonous ways of doing history, as it purported to

break through the triopoly of economic, political and cultural histories prevalent over the previous half century in the writing of general and dynastic history. It seeks to start from social life, so as to chart new territories and to mend the marginal and blank areas resulting from the old triopoly; meanwhile, it seeks to take advantage of the historical evolution of social life as a useful link to connect and to communicate between the tripartite histories so as to restore the true picture of history.¹³

If the revival of cultural history was founded on historians' conscious review and reappraisal of China's cultural traditions, then the revival of social history in China can be said to feature a wholesale importation of western social science and social science theory, especially from sociology and anthropology, as well as from western "new histories", French *Annales* research methodologies in particular.¹⁴ Quantitative analysis of society, case studies, field investigation, as well as the emphasis in sociology on social hierarchy and social mobility, have provided effective frameworks for social history research, while anthropological fieldwork has served to lead historians "out of the austere archives so that they can explore and experience the lives of village people on the one hand, and, on the other, transform those contemporary, fleeting, nonverbal data into useful references for future use".¹⁵ The total history and transdisciplinary research models of the *Annales* school have prompted social historians to do likewise, trying to integrate sociology, ethnography, anthropology, demography, etc., so as to give expression to the "history of society" and not simply "social history".¹⁶

The open nature of social history has enabled it to combine with cultural history, economic history, etc., to form new transdisciplinary fields such as social cultural history and socioeconomic history,

which now constitute some of the key areas of historical research. In social history itself, one can also detect a number of significant changes, for example the shift from concern with institutional setups and the elites to the populace considered from below, everyday life of the common people, health and medical care, ecology and environment, etc., giving rise to a host of subdisciplines, such as regional social histories, medicosocial history and socio-environmental history.¹⁷ However, due, on the one hand, to the “fragmentation” resulting from social historians’ commitment to, and enthusiasm for, ever more microscopic spaces (like street corners, small villages, temple fairs), and, on the other, to a certain loss of the specific characteristics of the historical past resulting from the heavy reliance of social historians on social science theories and methodologies, which they drew especially from anthropology, social history came to be denounced by both insiders and outsiders.¹⁸ It must be pointed out that this “attempt at ever more microscopic units and thick description of grassroots social life and culture” constitutes what a number of new and vigorous social historians view as the very gist of their “new social history”.¹⁹ This new social history endeavour brings few new elements to social history; so it has to bear the brunt of academic criticism and the test of social practices.²⁰

Paradigm shift: from ‘revolutionary history’ to ‘global history’

The development and transformation of historical studies in China not only features an intradisciplinary transfer; it is at the same time closely connected to contemporary trends of thought, political transition and social upheavals. For a long time, Chinese history was under the spell of the theory of class struggle. This was especially true of modern Chinese history, where this theory found ample application, giving rise to the so-called “revolutionary history paradigm”, where modern China witnesses the history of the Chinese people’s unceasing struggle against imperialism and feudalism, culminating in a revolution for national independence and social progress.²¹ Since the 1980s, with China’s modernisation drive in full swing, a new “modernisation paradigm” has emerged which insists that the ultimate driver of social change does not lie in class struggle, but rather in the development of the productive forces of society, and that a fundamental element of world history is the shift from premodern agricultural society to modern industrial society. In this new light, “the vicissitudes of China’s complicated transformations since the Opium War were centred on this central theme of a tradition-to-modernity shift, a trend as inevitable as it is independent of the will of human beings”.²² The modernisation paradigm not only challenged the revolutionary history paradigm, it removed the latter from its dominant position in modern Chinese historical research.²³ Of course, some scholars disagree about installing “modernisation” as the theoretical construct of the new paradigm, arguing that “equating China’s past century with a ‘history of modernisation’ is nothing but conjecture and hypothesis, which is farther away from the real truth”;²⁴ but other scholars with more of an academic background in world history stress the world history significance of the modernisation paradigm, saying that it certainly savours of a more universal flavour than the revolutionary history paradigm, especially when it is placed in the larger context of global transformations.²⁵

The battle between these two paradigms touches on differing interpretations of the relationship between modern Chinese history and the world history process, as well as on universal issues such as the degree of freedom, toleration and open-mindedness in pursuing historical studies. The result, it is to be hoped, will not be an antagonistic following of an either/or logic, since the two

paradigms can run parallel to or even complement each other. As the earliest advocate and exponent of the modernisation paradigm, Luo Rongqu, pointed out, “the effort of having modernisation as the core thread of modern Chinese history . . . should aim at a new comprehensive analytical framework incorporating, instead of rejecting, revolutions”.²⁶ Zhang Haipeng, an expert on modern Chinese history, also points out the need for modern Chinese history research to be not only guided by the revolutionary history paradigm, but also to borrow from the modernisation paradigm in seeking to address such issues as socioeconomic development, social changes and their backlash against revolutions, so as to perfect the revolutionary history paradigm.²⁷

In fact, the revolutionary history paradigm and the modernisation paradigm share a theoretical presupposition, namely, they both see Chinese history as static and passive, waiting to be aroused by the outside (the west in this case). The only difference is that the revolutionary paradigm implies a passive reaction, whereas the modernisation paradigm implies an active embrace.²⁸ Both are grand narratives, intending a monistic reconstruction of Chinese history, to the neglect of the agency and particularity of Chinese history. Meanwhile, behind such grand narratives lurks an implicit set of mythical and political constructions that blind historians, hindering them from seeking the ultimate truth. However, against this background, and with a strong repulsion to late twentieth-century grand narratives, a number of historians have turned to postmodernism for a re-examination of Chinese history. Quite quickly, topics and approaches such as the invention of traditions, the reproduction of knowledge, discourse analysis, historical memory, history from below, etc., have become the standard concerns of what is now termed the “new social history” or “new history”. Yet to be precise, the “new social history” can hardly be called a rigorous academic school, since scholars under this umbrella come from diverse backgrounds (mainland and overseas Chinese scholars as well as foreign scholars), and their approaches and methodologies also feature a high degree of hybridity. Thus genres such as microhistory, new cultural history, historical anthropology, textual analysis, etc., all manifest varying degrees of uncertainty. This has been especially the case in recent decades, during which the new social history has tried to distinguish itself from other schools of history by an ever more vague and hybrid new history approach. Accordingly, the new social history can be said to feature a research *perspective* rather than a research *paradigm*. All in all, postmodernist deconstruction is what new social historians now aim at.

A leading new social history advocate, Yang Nianqun, once wrote that “especially in social history research, the deconstruction of the modernist discourse in light of ‘postmodernist’ theories is, among other things, a specific analytical method, i.e., it tries, in the end, to contextualise history by going deeper into the various modernist presuppositions and their domination of historical research”.²⁹ In another article, he again reminds people that

amid the varying efforts and motivations to recover and rehabilitate public memory and everyday life in traditional societies by using sociology, anthropology, history or varying combinations of these, one finds manifestations of the critical force of ‘postmodernist’ theories. In research of this type, there are minute descriptions of how the ruling political ideology has given shape to public cognition, where there is a possibility to transcend both the ‘revolutionary history’ and the ‘modernisation’ narratives.³⁰

Another advocate, Sun Jiang, also a practitioner of the new social history, makes it more explicit by claiming that a central purpose of the new social history is to “give up the ambition of constructing a total history” and to “realise a shift of historical epistemology . . . [and] accept the postmodernist/poststructuralist textual interpretation, both [its] rationale and methodology”; he believes that “postmodernism opens up a new field of historical narrative never seen before”.³¹ In Sun Jiang’s understanding, the aim of the new social history is to “form an alliance with poststructuralist historiography”.³² Meanwhile, as if they are seeking to legitimise the rise of postmodernist historiography in China, some scholars stress that there is a natural affinity between the postmodernist approach and traditional Chinese historiography. For example, one notes that the postmodernist stance that sees historical study as a phenomenon of intertextuality finds a perfect representative in Zhao Yi, the Qing dynasty historian and his *Nian’ershi zhaji* [Notes on the 22 standard histories].³³ At the same time, the postmodernist textual interpretation is also compared to the historical textual criticisms prevalent during the reigns of emperors Qianlong and Jiaqing and to the modern positivist historians’ attitudes towards historical archives.³⁴ Although we cannot affirm that a paradigm shift from “modernism” to “postmodernism” has occurred in China, it is undeniable that the application of postmodernism by the new social history and new history scholars has brought substantial changes to the study of Chinese history.³⁵

Another budding field of historical research that is likely to assume a new paradigm status is the “global history paradigm”, which may be seen as a return to the grand narrative in the current context of paradigm diversification. To be sure, global history was imported to China with the translation and publication of works such as LS Stavrianos’ *A Global History: From Prehistory to the 21st Century*, Andre Gunder Frank’s *ReOrient: Global Economy in the Asian Age*, Kenneth Pomeranz’s *The Great Divergence: China, Europe, and the Making of the Modern World Economy*, and Jerry H Bentley’s *Traditions & Encounters: A Global Perspective on the Past*.³⁶ The reason why these publications have aroused the interest of Chinese scholars and given rise to discussions is closely connected to China’s gradual immersion in the globalisation process. China’s participation in globalisation has laid bare, according to some scholars, the artificial separation of Chinese history and world history in historical studies in China, which renders “incomplete any scenario of world history without China being part of it or Chinese history without the rest of the world in it, since neither is a true reflection of the historical landscape of China or the world”,³⁷ hence the need to globalise Chinese history. Meanwhile, the regained confidence that came as a result of a rising China and the craving to participate in world affairs have tended to excite some global history enthusiasts in China, who wish to test, through the new paradigm, the “corresponding vision and guts” of Chinese historians.³⁸

This being the case, global history has been welcomed by scholars of both traditional fields and the flourishing new territories. For example, scholars from traditional historical geography have pointed out the need for interstate, transnational and transregional comparative studies under the flag of the global view of history.³⁹ Such topics as the importation of foreign crops and the resultant competition between these and China’s local crops, and in turn the rise of monoculture, as opposed to the previous diversification in China’s agricultural crop structure, etc., have received diligent attention from Chinese scholars,⁴⁰ in an approach and perspective rarely seen before. Meanwhile, scholars from those new academic disciplines featuring a larger scope and the *longue durée*, like climate history and environmental history, find a natural affinity with global history. In a recent

publication on climate history, the author took particular care to describe the patterns of climate change in China and to compare these with those of the world so as to reach more accurate conclusions concerning China's climatic fluctuations.⁴¹ Environmental historians have also stressed another advantage of globalising environmental history, which, according to them, points in the direction of a future world history that would overcome both nationalism and anthropocentrism.⁴²

Compared with other scholarly fields, economic history has been the most comprehensive in employing the global view of history, and is therefore the most noteworthy field in this regard. In the view of some scholars, using the global view of history to approach economic history grants China a more important position than previously Eurocentrism-ridden world histories did, while at the same time offering to world historians a new view of China's economic history.⁴³ This globalised Chinese economic history displays an academic ambition in the following three aspects. First, it seeks to place China's economic history in a larger spatial context, paying attention to economic changes and their interrelationships not only in China but also in other parts of the world. Taking the example of the East Asian economic circle, it is not enough to see China's dominating position in it; it requires attention to the relationship between the economy of this circle and that of India, the Muslim world and Europe, as well as China's decline in relation to the rise of the west.⁴⁴ Second, it aims at comparative studies of both China and the rest of the world, and to use this as a platform to reexamine the prevalent models in previous Chinese economic history research in the hope of finding a model adequate to the task of accounting for China's economic realities. Recent comparative studies of the British model of capitalism in connection with the *Jiangnan* model of Ming and Qing China have made it clear that without the incursions of the west into China, the industrial revolution that occurred in areas south of the Yangtze would not have taken place. Consequently, it makes no sense to attempt to explain the roots of capitalism in China by simply applying the British model, for in Britain capitalism arose *sui generis*, independently and for the first time, whereas this was not the case in China. Copying the British model to explain the roots of capitalism in China would consequently land scholars in serious methodological problems.⁴⁵ Thirdly, it tries to use a certain product or commodity of global properties as a starter to link China and the world and to examine its global fluidity in relation to China's economy and society. For example, it has been discovered that the large flow of American silver into China in the eighteenth century did not lead to a corresponding price rise; instead, the influx was absorbed by China's "tribute economy" and played a significant role in expediting China's state finance and administrative operations.⁴⁶ Another typical example involves the two most important commodities of nineteenth-century China, tea (exported) and opium (imported), significant in the sense that they commanded the largest income and expenditure. The prism of tea and opium allows one to see China's important place in nineteenth-century globalisation, as well as the serious socioeconomic crises that it suffered.⁴⁷ The above trends and illustrations serve to show why "immersion into global history" has become fashionable and trendy among Chinese economic historians, tempting more scholars to try relevant new topics.

Constructing a new world history system: world history studies in China

As an important part of historical studies in China, "world history" is more or less a misnomer. First, in China the term world history refers to the history of all parts of the world *except for China itself* – but a world history from which China is absent hardly counts as a (complete) world history. Second, since an important reshuffling of the academic calendar that occurred in China in 1997, world his-

tory, originally comprised of ancient and medieval world history, modern and contemporary world history, and histories of different countries and regions, was compressed into one Class B category under the umbrella of history as a Class A academic discipline, alongside other seven Class B subjects. The effect of this was to cut down the fields scholars study, which substantially hindered the discipline's further growth.⁴⁸ This lasted until 2011, when, at the call and thanks to the effort of many world historians in China, world history finally attained its current Class A status, alongside archaeology and Chinese history. World history itself now comprises a total of five subdisciplines, namely, world historical theory and historiography, ancient and medieval world history, modern and contemporary world history, histories of different countries and regions, and special and total history. Yet despite this effort, the separation of world history and Chinese history remains, which goes ill with comparative history or other macrolevel research and renders ambivalent China's exact place in advancing research and teaching in world history. And not only that; most world historians in China are not competent in foreign languages, making it exceedingly hard for them to access primary archives in these languages, which hardly contributes to the depth and originality of their research. The result is that most world history research carried out by Chinese historians serves no other function than to introduce foreign world history research, past and present, as well as foreign historical theories and methodologies, to their fellow Chinese historians.

Yet despite these shortcomings, world history in China has scored important achievements. In terms of the histories of other countries and regions, apart from its traditional strength in studies of Western Europe and North America, Russia and Eastern Europe, India and Japan, recent Chinese historical scholarship has covered Southeast Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Middle East, among others.⁴⁹ Special histories, no longer confined to political history, economic history and cultural history, have been extended to cover urban history, family history, the history of women and children, the history of diseases, disasters and famines, environmental history, the history of education, etc.⁵⁰ As regards some of the most important junctures in world history, we now have ancient Egyptian history, the history of ancient Greece and Rome, medieval European history, the history of the Renaissance, early modern European history, etc.⁵¹ With the conviction that world history encompasses the totality of the evolution of humanity, scholars have long recognised that it is far from enough simply to extend the scope of coverage or to aim at ever finer academic distinctions. As early as 1978, the noted world historian Wu Yujin pointed out that "world history is essentially a macrohistory. And one important feature of macrohistory is its scope of vision, i.e., it should seek to distil from among the various national histories, regional histories, special histories, and to compare and synthesise, . . . so as to arrive at an overall development contour of the world, with the larger trends of each period clarified . . . Putting together a number of national and regional histories is not yet world history."⁵² As a response to this clarification, besides deepening their studies of national/regional histories, world historians in China have in recent years given considerable attention to total world history or world systems research. Since reform and opening-up, four major influential views or theories in connection with this have emerged in China, namely total/integral history, modernisation history, the history of civilisational exchange and global history.

The total or integral history approach was initiated by Wu Yujin in the 1980s and early 1990s, when he wrote a number of articles elaborating on subjects such as the relationship between the agricultural and nomadic worlds in world history, the evolution of the agriculture-based economy in

relation to the rise of industry and commerce, the nourishing of the industrial world by agricultural societies, the impact of the industrial world on agricultural worlds, etc., in an attempt to trace both the chronological and horizontal connections throughout world history.⁵³ In Wu's understanding, following Marx, world history came into being only gradually, as a result of the efforts of peoples and nationalities of various countries and regions to weave those chronological and horizontal ties. Chronologically, human beings throughout the world have evolved various modes of production that in time gave rise to differing levels and forms of human societies. Horizontally, world history has witnessed a gradual process of expansion, from mutual isolation and disconnectedness to an opening-up and tightening of connections. *Chronological evolution* and *horizontal connectedness* stand in a dialectic relation, with the levels of the former facilitating or restraining the range of horizontal connections, and degrees of the latter promoting or holding back the former's developmental levels. Accordingly, people at a lower level of development would find it impossible to engage in large-scale economic or other ties with other people, and places with fewer ties with other regions would usually develop at a sluggish pace. The common basis and the final drive behind both chronological evolution and horizontal connectedness is the progress of material production.⁵⁴ Wu's thesis that world history involves a process in which there is a movement "from scatteredness to totality" rests squarely on Marxist theories of world history and social development. Wu's view is often credited with being the most characteristic and innovative world history theory put forward in China under the guidance of Marxism. Thus, although Wu has been criticised for taking the formation of capitalism as the starting point for world history,⁵⁵ his macroscopic vision and totalistic view are still accorded serious attention.

The modernisation thesis was first proposed by Luo Rongqu in 1989, in an article published in China's leading professional historical journal, *Lishi yanjiu* (Historical Research). At the core of this thesis is Luo's "view of historical development based on the monistic multilinearity theory".⁵⁶ Later, the article, with a subtitle "New perspectives on the study of world history", further clarifying its significance for world history research, was included in his book *Lun yiyuan duoxian lishi fazhanguan: shijieshi yanjiu de xin shijiao* (New thoughts on modernisation: the world and China's modernisation).⁵⁷ The term "monistic" here refers to "social productive forces as the material basis for social development and economic transformation as the fundamental drive behind social growth", while "multilinearity" denotes "the multiple natural and social factors in any given society with a certain productive level. Though societies and the natural and social factors affecting them differ, societies can in general be categorised as belonging to different stages of development, following different models and embarking on different roads. No mode of production or social formation is unidirectional or static; each is multidimensional and dynamic."⁵⁸ Luo's "view of historical development based on the monistic multilinearity theory" is regarded by scholars as an innovative enrichment of Marxist historical theories and as a rejection of the unidirectional historical scheme of the five modes of production (and the corresponding five socioeconomic formations) proposed by theorists in the former Soviet Union, since it stresses the multiple possibilities for different countries and regions. And world history systems built on the basis of the monistic multilinearity view remove once and for all the theoretical misunderstanding that one can judge the level of social development regardless of social productive levels; in its stead, the theory and practice of the modernisation view affirm the complexities, diversities and uncertainties of the total process of human evolution.⁵⁹ Since Luo's theory is chiefly concerned with the analysis of general trends in world history since modernisation

tion began, its coupling of unity and diversity remains extremely important for the construction of a framework for modern and contemporary world history among historians in China.⁶⁰

Unlike total or integral history, which takes countries and regions as the basis of world history analysis, the unit of analysis in civilisational exchange theory is civilisation. In 2001, Peng Shuzhi published a theory-setting essay, titled “Lun renlei de wenming jiaowang” (A review of civilisation exchange), which was gradually enriched and perfected in his later publications.⁶¹ The gist of the theory can be summarised as follows: civilisational interaction and exchange is the ultimate driving force behind the transformation of human societies, and this is also a fundamental law of world history; civilisational exchanges and the development of productive forces form the horizontal and chronological threads of the evolution of human societies; civilisational exchanges have as their basis socioeconomic formations, whose evolution from lower to higher levels largely accounts for the shift from transregional to global civilisational exchanges; civilisational exchange is a reciprocal process among two or more different parties, leading to mutual impact, interpenetration, or even confrontation and conflict; peaceful interaction and violent confrontation are the two fundamental forms of civilisational exchange; in terms of levels of civilisational exchange, there are material exchanges, spiritual exchanges, institutional exchanges, and ecological exchanges.⁶² It is not difficult to see that Peng’s civilisational exchange theory is a synthesis of Marxist theories of exchange and productive forces, trying as it does to incorporate all human history from the very beginning of civilisation to globalisation into a single system while keeping an eye on the plurality and particularities of civilisations as well as the imbalanced character and complexity of world historical development. However, the civilisational exchange theory is more a philosophical argumentation than a concrete guide to world history research. Its operational applicability became even more clouded when, in a recent publication, Peng attributed the impetus for civilisational exchange to human consciousness or a prophetic vision.⁶³ In comparison, Ma Keyao offers a more intuitively revealing account of the communication, integration, conflict and confrontation among different civilisations in his two-volume *Shijie wenming shi* (A history of world civilisations).⁶⁴

We can summarise the above three approaches to world history as trying consciously to seek laws of world historical development on the basis of local, or at least localised, Chinese theoretical resources.⁶⁵ In contrast, the fourth approach, the global view of history, can be interpreted as resulting from Chinese world historians’ acceptance, critique and reinterpretation of an originally western world history theory. Contributing most to this fourth view is Liu Xincheng, who as far back as 1995 began to read systematically in global history, coming to sense its significance for constructing an approach to world history in China.⁶⁶ By 2004, Liu had set up the Global History Centre at Capital Normal University, where he serves as director and professor of history. In October 2004, the centre organised the first international conference on global history in China. Meanwhile, Liu wrote a number of articles introducing and reviewing the latest developments in global history, and the centre began to publish an annual academic journal, *Global History Review*, in 2008, with Liu as editor-in-chief. Compared with the old Eurocentrism-ridden world histories, the global view of history presents breakthroughs in approach, theory and methodology, ideology, historical periodisation as well as in discourse, and has attracted much attention from Chinese world historians. Yet, while the value of global history is being acknowledged, its shortcomings have also been pointed out. Some scholars say that while global history has the merit of transcending Eurocentrism and

the traditional nation-centred approach, its neglect of the impetus for historical change that comes from intrastate developments is a deficiency. Further, some Chinese scholars, alert to the neoliberalist ideology inherent in the global view of history, called on historians to instead write global histories based on Chinese national memory. Some scholars see the global view history as running counter to Marxist historical materialism and therefore unfit to guide world history teaching and research in China. And still others, with a strong antiwestern stance, thoroughly repudiate global history.⁶⁷ Acceptance, resistance or creative transformation, or whatever attitudes scholars may cherish, these constitute global history's impact on China's world history research and scholars' serious thinking about the construction of macro world history systems. Regarding an appropriate attitude towards global history, "it is perhaps more realistic," as Liu himself says, "for us to start from the current discourse structure (despite its strong western orientation) and make piecemeal corrections and amendments so that we can come nearer to consensus."⁶⁸

From the above four views of world history in China, it can be seen that world history research has been steadily progressing and coming to maturity over the past 30 years and more. Yet to be fair, it must be pointed out that world history did not develop naturally or spontaneously from traditional Chinese historiography. The terms, models and professional jargon that Chinese historians employ in constructing their own versions of world histories were originally borrowed from the west – that may be why, so far, despite Chinese scholars' earnest longing and their efforts to map out a Chinese-brand world history discourse, no really satisfying results have been achieved.⁶⁹ Not even total/integral history, bent on ridding world history of Eurocentrism, has been free from the Eurocentric shackles in its periodisation of modern world history; the "monistic multilineal" model also, regrettably, pays more attention to western developments than nonwestern experience.⁷⁰ Thus, it is no wonder that some scholars lament that, at least at the present time, the Chinese are not ready to write world histories; what they do write can be termed "quasi-world history", but not world history in a real sense.⁷¹ Conceivably, world historians in China have a long way to go before that goal can be attained.

Yet China has a long tradition of history writing, and for thousands of years Chinese historians have formed and displayed a set of unique and abstruse historical insights and awareness. It is only during the past century or so that, owing to the urgency of the tasks of nation-state-building and modernisation, Chinese historians have accepted western historical notions or assumptions such as progress and the underlying rationality of history and have launched an overall campaign to reconstruct Chinese historiographical traditions.⁷² Admittedly, as globalisation deepens, Chinese historiography will face tougher challenges from the dominant western historical discourse. Challenges also spell opportunities, however. So it is incumbent on Chinese historians to be sensitive to all foreign historiographies while steadfastly adhering to the best Chinese traditions, for only in this way can a unique and worthy model of Chinese historiography emerge. History is ultimately a study of human beings, as are all disciplines of the humanities. Hence its purpose is not only to explore one's own cultures and traditions but also to learn about those of others, in order to better understand the whole world in which we find ourselves, a world of multiple possibilities. So history is also a bridge for dialogue, in which Chinese historians have yet to fully exert themselves.

NOTES

- 1 In this context, “contemporary” signifies the post-1949 part of Chinese history, i.e., since the founding of the People’s Republic of China in 1949.
- 2 De Peng, Hong Yuan and Miao Jiasheng, “Zhanwang xinshiji zhongguo shixue fazhan qushi” [Anticipating the development trends of China’s historical studies in the new century], *Guangming Daily*, 2 October 2001, 2. See also Wang Xuedian, “Jin ershi nianjian zhongguo dalu shixue de jizhong zhuyao fazhan qushi” [Several major trends of mainland China’s historical studies during the past 20 years], *Shandong shehui kexue* [Shandong Social Sciences] 1 (2002): 91.
- 3 Chen Qitai, for example, sees three dimensions of China’s historical studies achievements during the first 17 years since the founding of New China, namely: first, historical studies of this period featured the correct orientation, by combining the basic tenets of the materialistic view of history and China’s specific realities; secondly, it carried forward the fine traditions of Chinese historiography while pursuing scientific rigour; thirdly, it was strongly resistant to dogmas and defended the integrity and dignity of history as a scientific discipline. See Chen Qitai, “Jianguo hou shiqinian shixue ‘wanquan zhengzhihua’ shuo de shangque” [A few remarks on the so-called “pure politicisation” thesis of historical studies during the 17 years after the founding of New China], *Xueshu yanjiu* [Academic Research] 12 (2001): 5.
- 4 See Lin Ganquan, “Ershi shiji de zhongguo lishixue” [China’s historical studies in the 20th century], *Lishi yanjiu* [Historical Research] 2 (1996): 19.
- 5 As Luo Zhitian points out, the fact that some contemporary scholars are turning a blind eye to historical studies conducted during the first 17 years after the founding of New China signals an interruption in China’s historiographical traditions, an interruption that is most probably “deliberately” chosen. See Luo Zhitian, “Wenge qian ‘shiqinian’ zhongguo shixue de pianduan fansi” [Fragments of thought on Chinese historiography during the “17 years” before the Cultural Revolution], *Sichuan daxue xuebao* [Journal of Sichuan University] (Social Sciences Edition) 5 (2009): 12.
- 6 It is generally believed that the “Five Golden Flowers” were pinpointed by China’s historical circle as a result of the latter’s conscious acceptance of Marxism as a guiding principle in tackling important historical issues related to current political realities, to the point of assuming paradigmatic status. In recent years, however, some scholars have noticed a tension in the marriage of Marxist theory (regarded as essentially a form of Western discourse) to Chinese historical experience, because by seeing Chinese history through a “Eurocentric” or “Orientalist” prism, it necessarily betrayed certain paradoxes and dilemmas. For example, Wang Xuedian has explicitly denounced the Marxist “Asiatic mode of production” theory as a form of “Orientalist rhetoric in a red cloak”: see Wang Xuedian, “Wuduo jinhua: Yishi xingtai yujing zhong de xueshu lunzhan” [Five Golden Flowers: academic battles in the context of ideology], *Wenshi zhishi* [Chinese Literature and History] 1 (2002): 10. For more details on this topic, see Jiang Haisheng, “Xifang huayu” yu “zhongguo lishi” zhijian de zhangli – yi “wuduo jinhua” wei zhongxin de tantao [The tension between “western discourse” and “Chinese history”: a case study centred on the “Five Golden Flowers”] (Jinan: Shandong University Press, 2009).
- 7 For representative publications, see Feng Tianyu, Zhou Jiming and He Xiaoming, *Zhonghua wenhuashi* [A history of the Chinese culture] (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 1990); Yin Falu and Xu Shu’an, eds., *Zhongguo gudai wenhuashi* [A history of ancient Chinese culture] (Beijing: Peking University Press, 1989–1991); etc.
- 8 For example, see He Ping, *China’s Search for Modernity: Cultural Discourse in the Late 20th Century* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002).
- 9 Two successively published collections on the theme of “Traditional Culture vs. Modernity” indicate the

degree of Chinese concern about this. See the Editorial Department of the Journal of Fudan University (Social Sciences Edition), ed., *Duanlie yu jicheng: Qingnian xuezhe lun chuantong wenhua yu xiandaihua* [Rupture and inheritance: young scholars on the traditional culture vs. modernity] (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 1987) and Jiang Yihua, Wu Genliang and Ma Xueqin, eds., *Gangtai ji haiwai xuezhe lun chuantong wenhua yu xiandaihua* [Scholars from Hong Kong, Taiwan and overseas on the traditional culture vs. modernity] (Chongqing: Chongqing chubanshe, 1988). For discussions and comments on the problem of the traditional culture vs. modernity in the 1980s, see Guo Shuanglin, “Ershi shiji zuihou ershi nian wenhua taolun zhi jiantao” [A review of cultural discussions during the last 20 years of the 20th century], *Henan daxue xuebao* [Journal of Henan University] (Social Sciences Edition) 5 (2004): 40–46.

- 10 Liu Zhiqin, “Zhongguo wenhuashi” [A short history of Chinese culture], in *Zhongguo lishixue sishi nian* [40 years of Chinese historical studies], ed. Xiao Li (Beijing: Shumu wenxian chubanshe, 1989), 424.
- 11 For the conservative features of the national studies craze, see Fang Keli, “Yao zhuyi jiushi niandai chuxian de wenhua baoshou zhuyi sichao” [Mind the conservative trends of thought emerging in the 1990s], *Gaoxiao lilun zhanxian* [Theoretical Front in Higher Education] 2 (1996): 30–36.
- 12 Xing Long and Hu Yingze, “Sanshi erli: Shehuishi yanjiu zai zhongguo de shijian” [Standing firm at 30: practices in China’s social history research], *Shehui kexue* [Journal of Social Sciences] 1 (2010): 140.
- 13 Editorial, “Ba lishi de neirong huan gei lishi [Give back to history what it originally had], *Lishi yanjiu* [Historical Research] 1 (1987): 78.
- 14 For Chinese social historians’ loans or borrowings from social sciences theories and the French Annales school methodologies, see Zhou Xiaohong, “Shi lun shehuishi yanjiu de ruogan lilun wenti” [A tentative discussion of several theoretical issues in social history research], *Lishi yanjiu* [Historical Research] 3 (1997): 67–81.
- 15 Cai Zhixiang and Cheng Meibao, “Huanan yanjiu: Lishixue yu renleixue de shijian” [South China Studies: practices in history and anthropology], *Huanan yanjiu ziliao zhongxin tongxun* [South China Research Resource Station Newsletter] 22 (2001): 2.
- 16 An expert of CCP history said that social history is not “history with political and social ingredients filtered out; rather, it encompasses the totality of society”. See Zhang Jingru, “Yi shehuishi wei jichu shenhua dangshi yanjiu” [Deepening CCP party history research on the basis of social history], *Lishi yanjiu* [Historical Research] 1 (1991): 89–90.
- 17 Representative publications include Wang Di, *Kua chu fengbi de shijie: Changjiang shangyou quyu shehui yanjiu (1644–1911)* [Stepping out of an enclosed world: social studies of the upper reaches of the Yangtze, 1644–1911] (Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1993); Yu Xinzhong, *Jiangnan wenyi yu defang shehui: Yi xiang shehuishi de yanjiu* [Famine in areas south of the Yangtze and regional societies: a study in the social history of medicare] (Beijing: Renmin University Press, 2003); Xia Mingfang, *Minguo shiqi ziran zaihai yu xiangcun shehui* [Natural disasters and regional societies of republican China] (Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 2000).
- 18 For critiques and comments on “fragmentation” in historical studies, see Zhang Kaiyuan, “Zhongshi xijie jujue ‘suipianhua’” [Emphasise detailed research, but say no to “fragmentation”], *Jindaishi yanjiu* [Modern Chinese History Studies] 4 (2012): 4–5; Xing Long, “Kefu ‘suipianhua’ huigui zongtishi” [Overcome “fragmentation” and return to total history], *Jindaishi yanjiu* [Modern Chinese History Studies] 4 (2012): 18–22; etc. Regarding the trends of conducting “fieldwork” in history studies, one anthropologist says that what is important for historians is not whether they, too, are equipped to do “fieldwork”, as anthropologists are, but whether “they could put their competence in critical textual inquiry to the sense

- of sight, sound, or even taste and smell of their field experience”, implying that one major strength of historians engaged in anthropological fieldwork remains that of combing archival references out of all this. See Lin Kaishi, “Renleixue yu lishixue de duihua? Yidian fanxing yu jianyi” [A dialogue across anthropology and historiography? Reflection and suggestions], *Taida wenshizhe xuebao* [Humanitas Taiwanica] 59 (2003): 18.
- 19 Yang Nianqun, “Daolun: Dongxifang sixiang jiaohui xia de zhongguo shehuishi yanjiu: yige ‘wentishi’ de zhuisu” [Introduction: China’s social history research in converging east/west thoughts – tracing the “history of the problem”], in *Kongjian jiyi shehui zhuanxing: “xin shehuishi” yanjiu lunwen jingxuanji* [Space, memory, social transformation: selected papers in “new social history”], ed. Yang Nianqun (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 2001), 56.
 - 20 For criticisms of the new social history, see Dai Hongliang, “Hou xiandai sichao yu zhongguo shehuishi de zhuanxiang” [Postmodernist trends and China’s turn to social history], *Qilu xuekan* [Qilu Journal] 5 (2011): 47–48.
 - 21 One can get an idea of the “revolutionary history paradigm” by looking at the “eight major events” of modern Chinese history, namely the Opium War, the Taiping Rebellion, the Self-Strengthening Movement, the Sino–French War, the Sino–Japanese War, the Hundred Days Reform Movement of 1898, the Boxers’ Rebellion and the 1911 Revolution.
 - 22 Luo Rongqu, “Zouxiang xiandaihua de zhongguo daolu” [China’s road towards modernisation], in *Xiandaihua xinlun xupian: Dongya yu zhongguo xiandaihua jin Cheng* [A sequel to new thoughts on modernisation: east Asia and China’s modernisation process] (Beijing: Peking University Press, 1997), 102.
 - 23 For a useful examination of the contrasting narratives of the revolutionary history paradigm and modernisation paradigm in modern Chinese history, see Huaiyin Li, *Reinventing Modern China: Imagination and Authenticity in Chinese Historical Writing* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2012).
 - 24 Wu Jianjie, “Guanyu jindaishi yanjiu ‘xin fanshi’ de ruogan sikao” [A few thoughts concerning the “new paradigms” in modern Chinese history research], *Jindaishi yanjiu* [Modern Chinese History Studies] 2 (2001): 266.
 - 25 See Dong Zhenghua, “Cong lishi fazhan duoxianxing dao shixue fanshi duoyanghua: weirao ‘yi yiyuan duoxianxing wei jichu de xiandaihua fanshi’ de taolun” [The modernisation paradigm based on monistic multilinear theory: a response to some pro and con comments], *Shixue yuekan* [Journal of Historical Science] 5 (2004): 5–20; Zhou Donghua, “Zhengque duidai zhongguo jindaishi yanjiu de ‘xiandaihua fanshi’ he ‘geming fanshi’: yu Wu Jianjie Gong Shuduo xiansheng shangque” [Treating properly the “modernisation paradigm” and the “revolutionary paradigm” in modern Chinese history research: a discussion with Wu Jianjie and Gong Shuduo], *Zhongguo shehui kexue luntan* [China Social Sciences Forum] 5 (2005): 83–108.
 - 26 Luo Rongqu, “Zouxiang xiandaihua de zhongguo daolu,” 100.
 - 27 Zhang Haipeng, “Ershi shiji zhongguo jindaishi xueke tixi wenti de tansuo” [Explorations into modern Chinese history as an academic discipline in the 20th century], *Jindaishi yanjiu* [Modern Chinese History Studies] 1 (2005): 29.
 - 28 For the critique of this Eurocentric approach to modern Chinese history studies, see Paul A Cohen, *Discovering History in China: American Historical Writing on the Recent Chinese Past* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984).
 - 29 Yang Nianqun, “Daolun: Dongxifang sixiang jiaohui xia de zhongguo shehuishi yanjiu: yige ‘wentishi’ de zhuisu,” 36.

- 30 Yang Nianqun, “‘Houxiandai’ sichao zai zhongguo: jianlun qi yu ershi shiji jiu shi niandai gezhong sichao de fuza guanxi” [On the trends of “postmodernist” thought in China in complex relationship to other trends of thought in the 1990s], *Kaifang shidai* [Open Times] 3 (2003): 27.
- 31 Sun Jiang, “Yuedu chenmo: houxiandai zhuyi, xinshixue yu zhongguo yuying” [A reading of silence: post-modernism, new history and the China context], in *Shijian, jiyi, xushu* [Events, memory and narratives], ed. Sun Jiang (Hangzhou: Zhejiang renmin chubanshe, 2004), 2, 22–23.
- 32 Sun Jiang, “Xin shehuishi shiye xia de zhongguo jindaishi yanjiu” [China’s modern history in light of the new social history], *Shixue yuekan* [Journal of Historical Science] 5 (2006): 9.
- 33 Q Edward Wang, “Houxiandai zhuyi yu zhongguo shixue de qianjing” [Postmodernism and the prospects of China’s historical studies], *Dongyue luncong* [Dongyue Tribune] 1 (2004): 19.
- 34 For a broader study of the methodology of evidential research and historical learning in Qing dynasty, see On-cho Ng and Q Edward Wang, *Mirroring the Past: The Writing and Use of History in Imperial China* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2005), 243–250.
- 35 See the “New Social History” series compiled and edited by Sun Jiang, et al., which has, so far, yielded three collections, namely Sun Jiang, ed., *Shijian, jiyi, xushu* [Events, memory and narratives] (Hangzhou: Zhejiang renmin chubanshe, 2004); Huang Donglan, ed., *Shenti, xinxing, quanli* [Body, mind and power] (Hangzhou: Zhejiang renmin chubanshe, 2005); Wang Di, ed., *Shijian, kongjian, shuxie* [Time, space and writing] (Hangzhou: Zhejiang renmin chubanshe, 2006). For the “New History” series, compiled and edited by Yang Nianqun, et al., see the six publications so far: Yang Nianqun, ed., *Ganjue, tuxiang, xushi* [Feeling, image and narratives] (Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 2007); Sun Jiang, ed., *Gainian, wenben, fangfa* [Concept, text and method] (Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 2008); Huang Xingtao, *Wenhuashi yanjiu de zai chufa* [A new start in the study of cultural history] (Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 2009); Huang Donglan, ed., *Zaishengchan de jindai zhishi* [Reproductions of modern knowledge] (Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 2010); Yang Nianqun, *Qingshi yanjiu de xinjing* [New vistas in Qing history research] (Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 2011); Xia Mingfang, *Lishi de shengtaixue jieshi: shijie yu zhongguo* [An ecological account of history: the world and China] (Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 2012).
- 36 The Chinese translations of the four publications appeared in 1988–1995, 2000, 2003 and 2007 respectively. Stavrianos’ *A Global History* was the earliest to come to China, but it was only in this century that the publication has come to be regarded as a classic in “global history”, with a revised new translation brought out in 2006.
- 37 Yu Pei, “‘Quanqishi guan’ he dangdai zhongguoshi yanjiu” [“The global view of history” and the study of modern Chinese history], *Dangdai zhongguoshi yanjiu* [Contemporary Chinese History Studies] 3 (2001): 12–13.
- 38 Liu Debin, “Juhe yu liebian: dangdai shijie de lishi yanjin” [Fusion and fission: the historical evolution of the contemporary world], *Shixue jikan* [Collected Papers of History Studies] 5 (2012): 4. Similarly, a Canadian Sinologist also argues that the task of constructing a world history for Chinese historians is to restore a sense of the worth and dignity of nonwestern peoples. See Ralph Croizier, “World History in the People’s Republic of China,” *Journal of World History* 1/2 (1990): 152.
- 39 See Mao Xi, “Quanqishi guan yu zhongguo lishi dilixue yanjiu fanwei de tuozhan” [The global view of history and the expansion of China’s historical geography studies], *Tianjin shifan daxue xuebao* [Journal of Tianjin Normal University] (Social Sciences Edition) 1 (2009): 46–51.
- 40 See Wang Baoning and Cao Shuji, “Qing zhi minguo shandong dongbu yumi, fanshu de fenbu: jianlun xinjin zuowu yu yuan zuowu de jingzheng” [The distribution of corn and potatoes in eastern Shandong

- in Qing and republican China with a note on the competition between the newly imported crops and the old crops], *Zhongguo lishi dili luncong* [Journal of Chinese Historical Geography] 4 (2009): 37–48.
- 41 See Ge Quansheng, et al., *Zhongguo lichao qihou bianhua* [Climatic change throughout Chinese history] (Beijing: Kexue chubanshe, 2011).
- 42 See Bao Maohong, “Zhongguo huanjingshi yanjiu he xin shijieshi de goujian” [China’s environmental history studies and the making of a new world history], *Dongyang wenhua yanjiusuo jiyao* [Memoirs of the Institute of Oriental Culture] 161 (2002): 266–280.
- 43 Li Bozhong, “‘Dafenliu’ shiguan yu jiangnan jingjishi yanjiu” [The view of history from the “great divergence” theory and economic history studies in areas south of the Yangtze], in *Guoqu de jingyan yu weilai de keneng zouxiang: zhongguo jindaishi yanjiu wushi nian (1979–2009)* [Past experiences and possible future trends: symposium on 30 years of modern Chinese history studies, 1979–2009], ed. Xu Xiuli (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe, 2010), 63.
- 44 See Chen Fenglin, “Dui dongya jingji quan de lishi kaocha” [A historical look at the east Asia economic rim], *Shijie lishi* [World History] 3 (2009): 38–50.
- 45 See Li Bozhong, “Yingguo moshi, jiangnan daolu yu ziben zhuyi mengya” [The British model, the Jiangnan method and the seeds of capitalism], *Lishi yanjiu* [Historical Research] 1 (2001): 116–126.
- 46 See Chen Chunsheng and Liu Zhiwei, “Gongfu, shichang yu wuzhi shenghuo: shilun shiba shiji meizhou baiyin shuru yu zhongguo shehui bianqian zhi guanxi” [Taxation, market and material life: the inflow of American silver and the social transformation in 18th-century China], *Qinghua daxue xuebao* [Journal of Tsinghua University] (Philosophy and Social Sciences Edition) 5 (2010): 65–81.
- 47 See Zhong Weimin, “Chaye yu yapian zai zaoqi jingji quanqiu hua zhong de zuoyong: guancha shiji shiji zhongguo weiji de yige shijiao” [The roles of tea and opium in the process of early globalisation: a perspective for examining China’s crises in the 19th century], *Zhongguo jingjishi yanjiu* [Researches in Chinese Economic History] 1 (2009): 96–105; Zhong Weimin, *Chaye yu yapian: shiji shiji jingji quanqiu hua zhong de zhongguo* [Tea and opium: China in the process of globalisation in the nineteenth century] (Beijing: Sanlian shudian, 2010).
- 48 History as a Class A academic discipline is subdivided into eight Class B subjects, namely ancient Chinese history, modern Chinese history, world history, archaeology and museology, theory and history of historiography, historical geography, historical philology, and the history of special topics. Except for world history and the history of special topics, five of these belong exclusively to the category of Chinese history.
- 49 Owing to limited space, entries of articles are excluded here. Important book publications include the following: Peng Shuzhi, ed., *Zhongdong shi* [The history of the Middle East]; Wang Zhilai, *Zhongya shi* [The history of central Asia]; Lin Beidian, *Lading meizhou shi* [The history of Latin America]; and Liang Yingming, *Dongnanya shi* [The history of southeast Asia] – all published by the People’s Press (Beijing) in 2010 under the series title “Regional Histories”. Peng Shuzhi, ed., *Zhongdong guojia tonshi* [The general history of Middle East countries] (Beijing: Commercial Press, 2000–2007) has altogether 13 titles, encompassing Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia, Israel, Iraq, Palestine, Turkey, Iran, Egypt, Syria and Lebanon, Yemen, Cyprus, and the five Gulf states, making 18 countries and regions in all.
- 50 For example, Wang Xu, *Meiguo chengshi shi* [An urban history of the USA] (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 2000); Yi Zhaoyin, et al., *Xifang funu shi* [A history of women in the west] (Beijing: Commercial Press, 2009); Wang Xudong and Meng Qinglong, *Shijie wenyi shi* [A history of the world’s famines] (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 2005); Mei Xueqin, *Huanjingshi yanjiu xulun* [An introduction to environmental history research] (Beijing: Zhongguo huanjing chubanshe, 2011); Chen

- Feng, ed., *Waiguo jiaoyu shi* [A history of education in foreign countries] (Beijing: Peking University Press, 2012).
- 51 Representative publications include Liu Wenpeng, *Gudai aiji shi* [A history of ancient Egypt] (Beijing: Commercial Press, 2000); Huang Yang and Yan Shaoxiang, *Xila shi yanjiu rumen* [A beginner's guide to research in ancient Greek history] (Beijing: Peking University Press, 2009); Yang Gongle, *Luoma shi gangyao* [An outline of Roman history] (Beijing: Commercial Press, 2007); Liu Minghan, ed., *Ouzhou wenyi fuxing shi* [A history of the European Renaissance] (Beijing: People's Press, 2008–2010), altogether 12 volumes including a general introduction followed by such themes as literature, arts, philosophy, religion, politics, law, historiography, economy, education, science and technology, and cities and life; Zhu Xiaoyuan, *Jindai ouzhou de xingqi* [The rise of modern Europe] (Shanghai: Xuelin, 1997); Zhao Wenhong, *Siren caichan quanli tixi de fazhan: xifang shichang jingji he ziben zhuyi de qi yuan wenti yanjiu* [Development of the private property rights system: the market economy and the origins of capitalism in the west] (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 1998).
- 52 Wu Yujin, "Guanyu bianzuan shijieshi de yijian" [A few comments on how to compile a world history], *Journal of Wuhan University* (Social Sciences Edition) 5 (1978): 39, 51.
- 53 See Wu Yujin, "Shijie lishi shang de youmu shijie yu nonggeng shijie" [The nomadic and agricultural worlds in world history], *Yunnan shehui kexue* [Social Sciences in Yunnan] 1 (1983): 47–57; "Shijie lishi shang de nongben yu zhongshang" [Farm-centred life and mercantile existence in world history], *Lishi yanjiu* [Historical Research] 1 (1984): 3–24; "Lishi shang nonggeng shijie dui gongye shijie de yunyu" [The nourishing of the industrial world by the agricultural world in history], *Shijie lishi* [World History] 2 (1987): 1–18; "Yaou dalu chuantong nonggeng shijie butong guojia zai xinxing gongye shijie chongji xia de fanying" [Differing responses to the impact of the industrial world from different countries within the traditional agricultural world of the Eurasian continent], *Shijie lishi* [World History] 1 (1993): 3–20.
- 54 Wu Yujin, "Shijie lishi: wei zhongguo dabaikae quanshu waiguo lishi juan zuo" [World history: preface to the *Encyclopaedia of China – Foreign History* volume], in *Wu Yujin xueshu zixuanji* [Wu Yujin: a collection of personal choices] (Beijing: Capital Normal University Press, 1995), 62–66.
- 55 Yu Jinyao, for one, points out that world history refers to the whole history of humanity since its birth, meaning that the precapitalist segment is inherently also part of world history despite the isolation and disconnectedness between different regions of the world, "Shijie lishi yu shijieshi xueke dingwei" ["The history of the world" and the disciplinary orientation of world history], *Shixue yuekan* [Journal of Historical Science] 10 (2009): 81–88.
- 56 Luo Rongqu, "Lun yiyuan duoxian lishi fazhanguan" [A view of historical development based on the monistic multilinear theory], *Lishi yanjiu* [Historical Research] 1 (1989): 3–20.
- 57 Luo Rongqu, "Lun yiyuan duoxian lishi fazhanguan: shijieshi yanjiu de xin shijiao" [A view of historical development based on the monistic multilinear theory: new perspectives on the study of world history], in *Xiandaihua xinlun: shijie yu zhongguo de xiandaihua* [New thoughts on modernisation: the world and China's modernisation] (Beijing: Peking University Press, 1993), 52–80.
- 58 Luo Rongqu, "Yiyuan duoxian lishi fazhanguan yu dongya xiandaihua jin Cheng" [A view of historical development based on the monistic multilinear theory and the modernisation process of east Asia], in *Xiandaihua xinlun xupian: Dongya yu zhongguo de xiandaihua jin Cheng* [A sequel to new thoughts on modernisation: east Asia and China's modernisation process] (Beijing: Peking University Press, 1997), 55.
- 59 Luo Rongqu, "Lun yiyuan duoxian lishi fazhanguan," 79.
- 60 See Qian Chengdan, "Shijie jinxiandaishi de zhuxian shi xiandaihua" [Modernisation: a major thread of modern world history], *Lishi jiaoxue* [History Teaching] 2 (2001): 5–10; "Yi xiandaihua wei zhuti jiangou

- shijie jinxiandaishi xin de xueke tixi" [Constructing a new disciplinary system of modern world history on the basis of the modernisation thesis], *Shijie lishi* [World History] 3 (2003): 2–11.
- 61 See Peng Shuzhi, "Lun renlei de wenming jiaowang" [A review of civilisation exchange], *Shixue lilun yanjiu* [Historiography Quarterly] 1 (2001): 5–18; *Wenming jiaowang lun* [On civilisation exchange] (Xi'an: Shanxi renmin chubanshe, 2002); *Shulu hongzonglu* [Paths and footprints of an academic life], Xi'an: Sanqin chubanshe, 2004; *Songyuzhai baiji: renlei wenming jiaowang sanji* [Moments in Beijing: random thoughts on civilisation exchange], Xi'an: Northwestern University Press, 2005.
- 62 Peng Shuzhi and Huang Minging, "Cong wenming jiaowang de gaodu bawo shijie lishi: fang Peng Shuzhi jiaoshou" [Grasping world history from the elevated perspective of civilisation exchange: an interview with professor Peng Shuzhi], *Shixueshi yanjiu* [Journal of Historiography] 1 (2008): 89; Peng Shuzhi, "Lun renlei de wenming jiaowang," 5–10.
- 63 Peng Shuzhi, *Liangzhai wenming zijuelun suibi* [Essays on civilisational self-awareness composed in Xi'an and Beijing], vol. 1 (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 2012), 72.
- 64 See Ma Keyao, *Shijie wenming shi* [A history of world civilisations], 2 vols. (Beijing: Peking University Press, 2004).
- 65 Marxism, despite its western origin, was completely sinicised during the past century, so it would not be unreasonable to see Marxism as a local form of theoretical resources.
- 66 Liu Xincheng and Zou Zhaochen, "Yige zhongguo xuezhe dui shijie lishi de sikao: Liu Xincheng jiaoshou fangtan lu" [A Chinese scholar's reflection on world history: an interview with professor Liu Xincheng], *Lishi jiaoxue* [History Teaching] 10 (2005): 9–10.
- 67 For Chinese scholars' ideas and attitudes towards the global view of history, see Liu Xincheng, "Quanqiu shiguan zai zhongguo" [The global view of history in China], *Lishi yanjiu* [Historical Research] 6 (2011): 180–187. This paper is translated and published as Liu Xincheng, "The Global View of History in China," trans. Sun Yue, *Journal of World History* 23/3 (2012): 491–512.
- 68 Liu Xincheng, "Quanqiu shiguan zai zhongguo," 187.
- 69 See Ma Keyao, "Bianxie shijieshi de kunjing" [The dilemmas of writing world history], *Guangming Daily*, 18 March 2006, 6; Liu Xincheng and Liu Wenming, "Zhongguo de shijieshi yanjiu liushi nian" [60 years of writing world history in China], *Lishi yanjiu* [Historical Research] 5 (2009): 15.
- 70 See Xu Luo, "Ping jinnianlai shijie tongshi bianzuan zhong de 'ouzhou zhongxin' qingxiang: jian jieshao xifang xuezhe dui 'zaoqi jindai shijie' de yizhong quanshi" [A note on the "Eurocentrist" tendencies in recent compilations of comprehensive world histories while introducing western scholars' interpretations of the "early modern world"], *Shijie lishi* [World History] 3 (2005): 94–97.
- 71 Ma Keyao, "Kunjing yu fansi: 'Ouzhou zhongxinlun' de pochu yu shijieshi de chuanglei" [Dilemma and reflection: disenchantment with Eurocentrism and the writing of world history], *Lishi yanjiu* [Historical Research] 3 (2006): 22.
- 72 As a Japanese historian has pointed out, with the diffusion of western historical methods to nonwestern cultural areas in the second half of the nineteenth century, "China – which had its own two-thousand-year-old historiographical tradition – also converted to western historiography." See Masayuki Sato, "Cognitive Historiography and Normative Historiography," in *Western Historical Thinking: An Intercultural Debate*, ed. Jörn Rüsen (New York: Berghahn, 2002), 129.