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tel. +39 050 542332, fax +39 050 574888, fse@libraweb.net

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Staging Global Publics: a Tentative Interpretation of the Rise of Global History in China*

Chen Hao

ABSTRACT · Whether in a democratic or authoritarian society, it is not uncommon to explain academic currents by taking political and economic factors into consideration. However, the impetus in the intellectual realm itself shall never be disregarded. The recent development of Global History in China can be explained adequately by Chinese intellectuals' persistent endeavor to stage global publics, rather than its pursuit of political and economic power worldwide.

KEYWORDS · Global History, China, Global Publics.

INTRODUCTION

IN one of his monographs on Global History published in 2011, Dominic Sachsenmaier remarked that China's outlook on World History/Global History is closely connected with its economic development and political status.¹ And this view has been accepted by Sebastian Conrad.² By revealing a less visible undercurrent of

howsenster@gmail.com, Shanghai Jiao Tong University, China.

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¹ Dominic Sachsenmaier, *Global Perspectives on Global History: Theories and Approaches in a Connected World* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 225-231.

² Sebastian Conrad, *Globalgeschichte: Eine Einführung* (München: C. H. Beck, 2013), 81.

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persistent pursuit to stage global publics³ existing in the intellectual realm, this paper is going to offer an alternative interpretation to the rise of Global History in China through three time horizons, not in chronological order: the 1980s, 2008 and beginning of twentieth century.⁴

I. INSTITUTIONALIZED PERSPECTIVES OF GLOBAL HISTORY IN CHINA

It is difficult to give an exact date when the Chinese historians began to know about the view of “Global History”, but 1987-1988 can be seen as a crucial time point. In 1987, Geoffrey Barraclough’s *Main Trends in History* was translated into Chinese.⁵ The term “a universal view of history” in Barraclough’s book was translated into Chinese as *quanqiu shiguan* (全球史观). It is for the first time that the term *quanqiuushi* appears in the Chinese literature. And one year later, L. S. Stavrianos’ *A Global History* was introduced to China.⁶ Both of them were published in Shanghai.

However, discussion on “Global History” in China had not been seriously started until 2000s. In 2004, the first Global History institute was established in the Capital Normal University in Beijing.⁷ And, in 2008, *Global History Review*, the first Global History journal

³ On the concept of “Global Publics”, see Jürgen Osterhammel, “Introduction”, *Global Publics: Their Power and Their Limits, 1870-1990*, ed. by Valeska Huber and Jürgen Osterhammel (London: Oxford University Press, 2020). As to nuances of concepts like “public sphere” and “publics” in English and “Öffentlichkeit” in German, see Jürgen Osterhammel, “Die Weltöffentlichkeit im 20. Jahrhundert”, *Die Flughöhe der Adler: Historische Essays zur globalen Gegenwart* (München: C. H. Beck, 2017), 54-74.

⁴ The method of using different time horizons to observe historical phenomenon is inspired by Jürgen Osterhammel. See Jürgen Osterhammel, “Vergangenheiten. Über die Zeithorizonte der Geschichte”, *Die Flughöhe der Adler*, 196-198.

⁵ 杰弗里·巴勒克拉夫：《当代史学主要趋势》，杨豫译，上海译文出版社，1987年。Geoffrey Barraclough, *Main Trends in History* (New York: Holmes & Meier Pub., 1991).

⁶ 斯塔夫里阿诺斯：《全球史通史》，吴象婴、梁赤民译，上海社会科学院出版社，1988年。Leften S. Stavrianos, *A Global History: From Prehistory to the 21st Century*, 7th edition (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1999).

⁷ Global History Center of Capital Normal University, <https://ghc.cnu.edu.cn/english/>.

was issued by the same institute. Meanwhile, many works of Global History from USA and Europe have been introduced into China by researchers from the institute. The founder of this institute is Liu Xincheng, who was then the vice-president of the university and later became the vice-chairman of the party China Association for Promoting Democracy.⁸ The proponents of Global History, who are mainly from the above-mentioned institute, emphasized that the core idea of Global History is “interaction”, and most importantly, it is against Euro-centrism, which is very attractive to the Chinese readers.⁹ The two leading proponents of Global History from Liu Xincheng’s team are Liu Wenming¹⁰ and Xia Jiguo.¹¹

However, at the same time, many historians in China also pointed out the potential risk of accepting Global History. Most of the serious critiques come from the Institute of World History at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. Yu Pei, the former leader of the above-mentioned institute, has warned that economic globalization is unavoidable, but cultures, or more exactly national cultures, should not be in convergence, and China should keep its own national memory while embracing the view of Global History.¹² Yu Jinyao, Yu Pei’s colleague, emphasized that, “interaction”, which is supposed to be the key concept of Global History, has been misused to describe all the processes of globalizations. It is not applicable to behaviors such as violence, colonization, invasion, exploitation, and so on. The misuse of “interaction” in

⁸ https://www.mj.org.cn/mjgk/mjzyxrldrjj/201911/t20191115_2722.htm.

⁹ Xincheng Liu, “Interaction: The Core of Global Historiography”, *Global History Review*, 2 (2009): 3-12. Liu’s recent article on Global History stated that some interpretations of Chinese scholars on Global History are not expected by the Western Global Historians. Xincheng Liu, “The Conception of Global History in China”, *Historical Research*, 6 (2011): 181-187, see also Xincheng Liu, “The Global View of History in China”, *Journal of World History*, 23 (September 2012): 491-511.

¹⁰ Liu Wenming’s newest article on Global History, see Wenming Liu, “Global History Studies in China: A Review and Some Reflections”, *Historiography Quarterly*, 6 (2021): 91-102.

¹¹ Jiguo Xia, “Understanding the Global History”, *Historiography Quarterly*, 1 (2010): 43-52.

¹² Pei Yu, “The Global History in National Historical Memories”, *Historiography Quarterly*, 1 (2006):18-30, especially 27-30.

Global History conceals the disgraceful history of colonialism and imperialism.¹³

Since 2010, the main theme concerning Global History in China has been shifted to the topic of “Global History with Chinese characteristics”. The discourse of “Chinese characteristics” can be traced back to the so-called “Socialism with Chinese characteristics”, which is the adapted form of Marxism-Leninism by the Chinese government since the 1980s. Despite the fact that almost all of the western historical theories have been introduced into China, and lots of historical works, including the newest ones, have been translated for the Chinese readers, the dominant methodology of history writing in China is still Marxism. Within this context, we can well understand the concerns of many Chinese historians when they speak about Global History.

So, what does “Global History with Chinese characteristics” look like? At least three requirements have to be met. First, it should be in harmony with the ideology of Marxism. Zhang Yiping, in his *Introduction of Global History*, explored the idea of “World History” of Karl Marx, and concluded that Marx’s view of history is actually “global”.¹⁴ Dong Xinjie, who is also a member of the Institute of World History at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, criticized that the way Global Historians research transcultural interactions is still to use empirical, positive and inductive methods to describe historical processes. This methodology is unlike (or in other words, less advanced than) Marxism, which is to explore the general laws of human society.¹⁵

Second, it should provide a world view from the perspective of China. This aim is relatively easy to achieve. As Zhang Xupeng, also Yu Pei’s colleague, mentioned, the view of Global History did not disarm the traditional national view, and therefore it

¹³ Jinyao Yu, “The Ideas and Methods of Global History: A Critique”, *Historiography Quarterly*, 1 (2006): 149-151, especially 151.

¹⁴ Yiping Zhang, *An Introduction to Global History* (Beijing: People’s Publishing House, 2012).

¹⁵ Xinjie Dong, “Methodology of Western Global History”, *Historiography Quarterly*, 2 (2015): 55-63, especially 63.

would be realistic to write a World History from the perspective of China.¹⁶

Third, it should reveal the “globalizations” that have been fueled by socialism, such as the spread of socialism ideology and how it was used to transform modern China. Cao Xiaowen, who is an expert of Marxism and works at the Global History Center of Capital Normal University, pointed out that, until now, the globalization(s) that have been researched by western historians are always the processes driven by capitalism.¹⁷

In addition to the Global History Center at Capital Normal University, there are a few other Global History institutes in China, such as the Institute for Global History at Beijing Foreign Studies University (since 2014), the Institute for Global and Transnational History at Shandong University (since 2016), the Center for Global Intellectual History at East China Normal University (since 2019). Besides the *Global History Review*, since 2021 there is a second journal, the *Chinese Journal of Global History* issued by Li Xuetao, the leader of the Institute for Global History at Beijing Foreign Studies University.

Considering the fact that the field of Global History has been established in China for less than twenty years, it is not surprising that the number of Global Historians in China is not very large. However, we still have to consider the factors that are obstructing Global History in China. One of the factors counteracting the development of Global History in China actually comes from the institutional barriers. Since 2011, according to the newest document issued by the Academic Degrees Committee of the State Council, the discipline of “World History” has been improved to the same level as “Chinese History”, both recognized as a “First Class Discipline”. Before that, World Historians in China felt inferior to their colleagues dealing with Chinese history, because World History

¹⁶ Xupeng Zhang, “National Narratives in Chinese Global History Writing”, *Analysing Historical Narratives: On Academic, Popular and Educational Framings of the Past*, ed. by Stefan Berger, Nicola Brauch and Chris Lorenz (New York: Berghahn Books, 2021), 259-281.

¹⁷ Xiaowen Cao, “Global History Research: Reflections upon and Construction of Nation-State Discourse”, *Historiography Quarterly*, 4 (2021): 112-124, especially 122.

had been regarded as a sub-discipline under the category of “Chinese History”. Needless to say, categorization in China or elsewhere is a tool to allocate resources. Since 2010s, World Historians in China have been feeling triumphalism, because they can recruit more graduate students and obtain more grants. However, at the same time, the “independence” of World History from Chinese History also means that the gap between the two disciplines will become larger and larger. Today in China, it has become quite difficult for historians from the two disciplines to sit down together and discuss some common topics.

II. GLOBAL HISTORY IN ACTION IN CHINA

Besides the historians from the above two institutes in Beijing, there are also many other scholars in fields like economic history, intellectual history and so on, talking about Global History. They care about more specific questions such as how to apply the methodology of Global History into their own research. Li Bozhong, regarded as a member of the “California School”, had already earned his fame in late 1990s through his research on the economy of Early Modern China.¹⁸ With his recently published book on China and East Asia in the age of early economic globalization, the eminent historian of economy has become one of the leading global historians in China.¹⁹ While readers really have difficulties in finding the core concepts of Global History such as ‘connection’ and ‘interaction’ in the jungles of historical sources, and detailed but sometimes tedious discussions about the technology of gunpowder, Li Bozhong’s debut Global History book, although with very fancy title and ambitious introduction, can barely be seen as essentially different from the traditional history writing from national perspective.

¹⁸ Bozhong Li, *Agricultural Development in Jiangnan, 1620-1850* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1998). Bozhong Li, *An Early Modern Economy in China: The Yangzi Delta in the 1820s* (New York: Cambridge University Press, new edition, 2021).

¹⁹ Bozhong Li, *Gunpowder and Account Book: China and the East Asian World in the Age of Early Economic Globalization* (Beijing: SDX Joint Publishing Company, 2016).

Ge Zhaoguang, one of the leading intellectual historians in China, led a team in Shanghai since 2006 to work on a project called “Look at China from Encircling Areas” by collecting sources concerning China preserved in other Asian languages, to reconstruct a more complex China-image through the eyes of envoys from neighboring countries such as Korea, Vietnam and Japan.²⁰ Whatever his initial intention of designing this project was, it turned out that the centrality of China in East Asia has been intensified. Partly in order to counter criticisms, he started a second project called “The Inside and Outside of Historical China” since 2016. This project ends with a book published in Hongkong, which is basically a conceptual history of “China”.²¹ He emphasized that the borderline of pre-modern (or “historical” in his words) China is floating, as the territory of “China” in history sometimes expanded and sometimes shrank, and as a result, the “outside” could become “inside” and vice versa. The newest project of Ge Zhaoguang is “Global History from the Perspective of China”, which is a podcast program on a “Global History of 3 million years” cooperated with a TV anchor.²² Ge believed, ten years ago, that accepting Global History does not mean that the national historiography has been outdated, and “When Chinese scholars write a Global History, they will consciously pile in more accounts concerning China.”²³

Liu Xiaofeng, one of the leading scholars in Christian theology in

²⁰ It is not easy to accurately translate the core concept *Zhoubian* of the project title 从周边看中国 into English. I assume he means “neighboring” or “on the borders”. But the word can also be translated as “marginal countries” or “periphery countries”, both of which indicate China-centrism. He has published a book out of the project. Its title is quite ambiguous, and can roughly translate into English as “Living here in China (lit. ‘Middle Kingdom’)”. The expression appears in a bronze inscription dating back to 8th century BC or earlier. Zhaoguang Ge, *Living Here in China: Reconstructing the Historical Narrative Concerning “China”* (Beijing: Zhonghua Publishing House, 2011).

²¹ Zhaoguang Ge, *The Inside and Outside of Historical China: A Reclarification of the Concept of “China” and Its “Borders”* (Hongkong: The Chinese University Press, 2017).

²² The title of the program 从中国出发的全球史 can literally be translated as “Global History starting from China”.

²³ Zhaoguang Ge, “Is National History Still of Value in the Trend Toward Global History?”, *Chinese Culture*, 2 (2012): 26-30, especially 26, 29.

China, in a review for Satoshi Hirano's book on how shall East Asia deal with the heritage of the Inner Asian empire (Qing), which belongs to the Japanese Kodansha World History Series, pointed out that the author intended to embed Taiwan's history into "Global History", and to foster a desire among the new generation of Taiwan people to stage the "world" [rather than stay in the China-sphere]. In other words, "Global History" has become a tool for political activities seeking for Taiwan independence.²⁴ In another essay concerning the crisis of humanistic education in China, Liu believes, as soon as Global History makes its way into the curriculum in China, it will unavoidably happen that our young generation will lose their "inherent historical consciousness of China" and embrace "cosmopolitanism".²⁵

In the opening speech for the 7th International Conference on Eurasian Steppe in Shanghai in 2018, the author of this article proposed to the fifty Medieval Eurasian historians from ten different countries that "The best way to do Eurasian Studies, is to do it globally."²⁶ The result of this conference is a book called *Competing Narratives between Nomadic People and Their Sedentary Neighbors*, published in Hungary.²⁷ In a recent article, he made a comparative study of the variant ethnogenesis narratives of the Early Turks preserved in Chinese (she-wolf), Greek (Scythians), Latin (Trojans), and Arabic sources (Noah). He believes that the shared motif of she-wolf in the legends of Romans and Turks should not be regarded merely as coincidental, but deserves a better explanation from the perspective of Global History. Furthermore, scholars can't avoid the similarity between the Old Turkish runic inscriptions and those found in Scandinavia and Great Britain, in spite that

²⁴ Xiaofeng Liu, "Consciousness of World History and Classical Education", *Peking University Education Review*, 1 (2019): 2-29, especially 25.

²⁵ Xiaofeng Liu, "'Global History' and the Crisis of Humanistic-political Education", *Peking University Education Review*, 4 (2020): 102-117, especially 112, 116-117.

²⁶ Hao Chen, "Do Inner Asian history within the context of Global History", *Wenhui Bao*, December 18, 2018.

²⁷ *Competing Narratives between the Medieval Nomadic People and their Sedentary Neighbors: Papers of the 7th International Conference on the Medieval History of the Eurasian Steppe*, Nov. 9-12, 2018, Shanghai University, China, ed. by Hao Chen, Studia Uralo-Altaica 53 (Szeged: Szeged University Press, 2019).

the present archaeological finds are not sufficient to explain such trans-continental connections.²⁸

Cao Yin, a specialist on the Indian diasporas in Asia of 20th century, has already published his first monography and many articles on Global History in English.²⁹ In one of his case studies on the Sikh people, he criticized the top-down approach of the traditional imperial history, and practiced a history from below, by revealing the interaction between the Sikh communities in Singapore and Hongkong.³⁰ The other case study by Liu Yin concerns the network established by Jewish community in Kaifeng, an inner city of China. He emphasized that Silk Roads consisted of networks rather than linear connections, and tried to reconstruct a complete picture of their origins, migrating routes, and how they eventually established a community in Kaifeng, which enabled the Jewish diasporas across Eurasia to reach out to the heartland of China.³¹

As to monographs of Global History in China, we have to admit that it is not very rich. Zhong Weimin, head of the history department at Tsinghua University, has written a popular Global History work, *Tea and Opium: China in the Process of Economic Globalization in the Nineteenth Century*.³² Zhong Weimin compared the trade of tea and that of opium in the nineteenth century, borrowing Alan and Iris Macfarlane's view that tea has played a crucial role in the

²⁸ Hao Chen, "Analysis of the Turk Ethnogenesis Narratives within Global History", *Historical Review*, 3 (2022), forthcoming.

²⁹ Yin Cao, *From Policemen to Revolutionaries: A Sikh Diaspora in Global Shanghai, 1885-1945* (Leiden: Brill, 2018). Yin Cao, "The Bombs in Beijing and Delhi: The Global Spread of Bomb-making Technology and the Revolutionary Terrorism in Modern China and India", *Journal of World History*, 4 (2019): 559-589. Yin Cao, "The Return of Chen Ching Lin: Chinese Deserters and Chinatowns in the British Raj, 1943-1946", *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, 5 (2021): 888-902.

³⁰ Yin Cao, "The Colonial Empire in Global History: A Case Study on Sikh Police Units in Singapore and Hong Kong", *Twenty-First Century* (February 2015): 82-100.

³¹ Yin Cao, "The Orphan Colony of Henan or the Trading Network of the Silk Road? Rethinking on the Jewish Settlements in China during the Song and Yuan Dynasties", *Journal of Maritime History Studies*, 1 (2015): 11-37.

³² Weimin Zhong, *Tea and Opium: China in the Process of Economic Globalization in the 19th Century* (Beijing: Zhonghua Publishing House, 2010). The revised version was published in 2021.

forming of industrial revolution.³³ He also pointed out that the phenomenon of the introduction and consumption of tea overlapped in time with the process of Britain's growing into a great power and the introduction of opium into China overlapped in time with the process of its decaying. These phenomena cannot be explained as just coincidental.³⁴

The newest book with a global view in Chinese book market is written by Xu Tao, a researcher at the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences. In his third monograph and fifth book *Shanghai Volunteer Corps: A History of Shanghai in a Global Context*, Xu Tao explored the history of foreign concessions in Shanghai through the organization of Shanghai Volunteer Corps.³⁵ In another province which has a history of colonization, Ma Guang has published his English monography on Shandong by embedding it in the Early Modern East Asian maritime history.³⁶ Ma Guang received his Ph.D. in Europe and is also a blogger providing newest information about books, conferences, and talks on Global History.³⁷

The opinion that the popularity of World History/Global History in China obviously has to do with the status of China as a political and economic world power was primarily based on an observation up to the year 2011.³⁸ However, if we take a look at the

³³ Alan MacFarlane & Iris MacFarlane, *The Empire of Tea* (London: Random House, 2004), 189.

³⁴ See also: Weimin Zhong, "The Roles of Tea and Opium in Early Economic Globalization: A Perspective on China's Crisis in the 19th Century", *Frontiers of History in China*, 5, 1 (2010): 86-105, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11462-010-0004-0>.

³⁵ Tao Xu, *Shanghai Volunteer Corps: A History of Shanghai in a Global Context* (Shanghai: Shanghai Lexicographical Publishing House, 2021). The other two monographs of him are as follows. Tao Xu, *Sun Yat-sen and Shanghai* (Guangzhou: Guangdong Economy Publishing House, 2012). Tao Xu, *Bicycles and Modern China* (Shanghai: Shanghai People's Publishing House, 2015). Xu Tao is also a co-editor of *The Habitable City in China: Urban History in the Twentieth Century* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).

³⁶ Guang Ma, *Rupture, Evolution, and Continuity: The Shandong Peninsula in East Asian Maritime History During the Yuan-Ming Transition* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2021).

³⁷ <https://www.maguang.net/>; <https://www.haijiaoshi.com/>.

³⁸ Sachsenmaier, *Global Perspectives on Global History*, 225-231; Conrad, *Globalgeschichte: Eine Einführung*, 81.

development of Global History in China after 2011, we will find out that the impulse basically comes from below, not above. Therefore, we will turn our attention from the political and economic realm to the community of scholars to look for a new interpretation to the rise of Global History in China through three different time horizons.

III. FROM “CULTURAL FEVER” TO “WORLD HISTORY FEVER”

In the fall of 1988, a Ph.D. candidate in Philosophy at Nanjing University came up with an idea to introduce works of sinologists in the west. The book series was named “Overseas Sinological Series” (*haiwai zhongguo yanjiu congshu* 海外中国研究丛书), which turned to be a phenomenal success in the Chinese public sphere of the last thirty years. The publisher then believed that “from the perspective of developed countries to look at Chinese history, culture and status quo, will be useful for the open-up policy and the modernization in China.” In 2018, a press conference on occasion of the 30th anniversary of the book series was held in Beijing. The title of that philosophy student became the “Professor of Tsinghua University”. With 185 books on his side, he was giving a talk in a nostalgic but proud tone to an audience of hundreds of scholars, students and publishers.

Up to April 2022, the “Overseas Sinological Series” has published 210 books in total, including authors such as John Fairbank, Owen Lattimore, Philip Kuhn, Joseph Esherick, Patricia Ebrey and so on. If we take a closer look at the citizenships of the authors, we will find out: 127 from USA, 27 from Japan, 15 from England, 8 from Germany, 5 from Australia, 4 from France, 4 from Canada, 3 from Holland, 2 from Korea, 1 from Belgium, 1 from Austria, 1 from Denmark, and 12 from China who wrote in English. So, more than half of the authors are from the USA. Actually, most of the books whose authors coming from other countries except Japan, are also written in English. For instance, only 2 of the 8 books by German scholars were translated from German, namely Adrian Hsia’s *Deutsche Denker über China* and Max Weber’s *Konfuzianismus und Taoismus*. The latest German author included in this series is Joachim Kurtz from Heidelberg.

In his talk, the chief-editor, Professor Liu Dong, also expressed his concern about the side effects of his series. “On the one hand, this series has introduced the basic norms and methods of doing research to the Chinese academia. On the other hand, it resulted that the new generation of Chinese scholars got more and more influenced by overseas Sinological methodology. Our intention was to introduce overseas scholars’ perspectives and take them as reference, but it turned out that their perspectives have become ours.”³⁹ Whether consciously or unconsciously, this series of books have influenced a lot on the younger generation scholars’ research style.

The idea of translating western sinological works into Chinese was rooted in the so-called “Chinese Cultural Fever” in the late 1980s. Chinese academia had also partly achieved their wish of staging global publics through interactions with the circle of China experts in the West, and mostly in the US. Its significance can also be discussed in a wider context. China, after its Open Door Policy was initiated in 1978, has been looking for a comfortable way to deal with the world. By learning about the western perceptions of China through translating their books, China can more confidently reconstruct a new self-image. The sinological series is still going on, but it has become less influential, because the audience in China now wants to learn more about “the others” in the world.

The second time horizon through which we can observe the rise of “Global History” in China is the year 2008 when the Beijing Olympics was taking place. With a cosmopolitanism slogan “One World One Dream”, China clearly expressed its world view and did not hide its ambition to get back to the center of the global stage. From the same year on, until Covid-19 broke out, the number of outbound journeys of Chinese tourists increased dramatically.⁴⁰ As millions of Chinese tourists were travelling abroad annually, a huge impetus to learn about world history caused a “World History Fever” in the Chinese book market in the 2010s. And there is

³⁹ <http://www.guoxue.com/?p=10792>. Accessed May 4, 2022.

⁴⁰ The number increased from 47.66 million in 2009 to 169.21 million in 2019. See <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1068495/china-number-of-outbound-tourist-number/>. Accessed May 26, 2022.

no sign showing us that the huge demand for world history books is declining in today's China, despite the negative experience of the lock-down policy (until 2022) that has limited physical movement within a distance of less than one kilometer.

In this trend, "The Oracle Series" of the Social Science Academy Press (*sheke wenxian chubanshe*) (*jiaguwen* 甲骨文) is very outstanding. The first book of this series came out in 2013. Within eight years, they have published 254 books in total. Their aim in 2022 is to publish 67 books. And among the authors, there are 94 from USA, 77 from England, 38 from Japan, 20 from Germany, 4 from France, 1 from Switzerland, 1 from Belgium, 4 from Canada, 1 from Ancient Greece, 1 from Denmark, 1 from Hungary, 1 from Israel, 1 from Italy, and 10 from China. If compared with the sinological series, we will find out that the percentage of USA authors decreased from 60% to 37%, and that of British and German authors increased from 7% to 30% and from 3.8% to 7.8% respectively. We can learn at least two things from the statistics. First, in addition to USA, China is paying more attention to other members in the West such as Great Britain and Germany. Second, the number of non-English foreign language talents increased a lot in China since the 1980s.

Besides the "Oracle Series", the Social Science Academy Press has another series called "The Thorn Bird" which also includes World History works such as Jürgen Osterhammel's *China und die Weltgesellschaft: Vom 18. Jahrhundert bis in Unsere Zeit*. In addition, one of the oldest publishing houses in China, the Shangwu also started a "Global History" series. This series is relatively less influential, and has published only six books in total. Neither Sebastian Conrad's *Globalgeschichte: Eine Einführung* in 2018⁴¹ nor Jürgen Osterhammel's *Die Flughöhe der Adler* in 2021⁴² were included in that series, although published by the same press.

The newly established CITIC publishing house also has a series of "Global History", the first of which was Sebastian Conrad's *What Is Global History*. Since 2018, this series has brought out only 7 books, because the CITIC publishing house has another much

⁴¹ [德] 康拉德:《全球史导论》,陈浩译,商务印书馆,2018年。

⁴² [德] 于尔根奥斯特哈默:《全球史讲稿》,陈浩译,商务印书馆,2021年。

more ambitious series called “K Community” (*jianshi chengbang* 见识城邦) targeting the World History market. It has published 58 books since 2017, including authors such as Eric Hobsbawm, John McNeill, David Christian, Fernand Braudel, David Armitage, Shmuel N. Eisenstadt, Steven Pinker, Akira Iriye and so on. The Post Waving (*houlang* 后浪) publishing company has a very influential series “Hanqingtang (汗青堂)” which is committed to publish “global history masterpieces with both academic and popular features”. Since 2015 they have introduced more than 80 titles, including *Empire of Cotton* by Sven Beckert, into China.⁴³ Needless to say, other publishing houses in Beijing, Shanghai and other cities also bring out many works on World History every year.

IV. CHINESE ORIENTALISTS AS A POTENTIAL FORCE TO STAGE GLOBAL PUBLICS

The first introduction to Global History translated into Chinese is written by Pamela Kyle Crossley.⁴⁴ However, she got her fame in China not because of Global History, but through the so-called “New Qing History”. Along with Mark Elliot, Evelyn Rawski, Peter Perdue and others, Crossley has been labeled as “New Qing History School”, which stirred up a big debate in the Chinese public sphere. The proponents argue that the New Qing Historians have set us a good example of how to use Manchu sources, and they revealed the “Inner Asianess” of the Qing dynasty.⁴⁵ The opponents argue that the New Qing Historians misused terms such as ‘empire’ and ‘imperialism’, and misinterpreted Qing’s activities in the discrete frontiers such as Tibet, Mongolia and Turkestan as exploitation and colonization, not different from the British and Russian imperialism. The New Qing History has fundamentally

⁴³ <https://en.hinabook.com/%E5%93%81%E7%89%8C%E5%8F%8A%E4%B8%9B%E4%B9%A6>.

⁴⁴ Pamela Kyle Crossley, *What Is Global History?* (Cambridge: Polity, 2008). [美]柯娇燕著, 刘文明译 《什么是全球史?》, 北京大学出版社, 2009年。

⁴⁵ One of the leading proponents of New Qing History in China is Yao Dali from Fudan University. Zhaoguang Ge, Dali Yao, et al., *Frontiers, Ethnicity and Identity in Ancient China* (Beijing: Zhonghua Publishing House, 2016).

challenged the conventional historiographical narrative that Qing is one of the Chinese feudal dynasties, just like Tang, Song and Ming. And therefore, China's claim, no matter in the past or today, on those territories will be questioned in the sense of legitimacy, which can cause a strong wave of unease in the Chinese public sphere.⁴⁶

If we regard the New Qing History debate in China as an attempt to stage Global Publics, we must say it is not "global" enough, because basically it has involved only scholars of the US and China, while European scholars, either historians or sinologists, are almost silent. And, more often, Chinese scholars are debating with themselves. Disagreements between the proponents and opponents of the New Qing History have been interpreted as an ideological dispute between liberalism and nationalism in the Chinese public sphere, and therefore the discussion has been severely politicized and the New Qing History has been stigmatized in China.⁴⁷

The claim that Chinese historians only make use of Chinese sources in their research and neglect the sources preserved in other ethnic group languages such as Manchu, Mongolian, Turkic, Tibetan and others has disregarded the tradition of Oriental studies that has been established in China since the beginning of the 20th century, which is also the third time horizon that would be useful for us for observing the rise of "Global History" in China. One of the greatest modern Chinese historians, Chen Yin-ke, studied Indology and other Oriental languages with Heinrich Lüders in Berlin and later in Zurich from 1910 to 1914 when WWI broke out. After he returned to China, he became a fellow of the Institute of History and Philology, Academia Sinica. Chen had transferred the German school of Oriental studies to China and laid a solid foundation for the establishment of Chinese Oriental studies. This tradition was continued by Ji Xianlin, who studied Indology with Ernst Wald-

⁴⁶ One of the leading opponents of New Qing History is Wong Young-tsu, who received his education in Taiwan and USA. *Re-discussion on the Nature of the Qing Empire*, ed. by Young-tsu Wong (Taiwan: Yuan-Liou Publishing Co., Ltd., 2014).

⁴⁷ The most active critic of New Qing History is Zhong Han from China Minzu University. Han Zhong, *Re-exploration of the Fundamental Nature of the Qing History* (Beijing: China Minzu University Press, 2018).

schmidt in Göttingen from 1935 to 1946. After Ji returned to China, he established the Department of Oriental Languages at Peking University. He did not have an opportunity to use his talents until the 1980s. On occasion of the newly unearthed Tocharian manuscripts in Xinjiang, Ji reestablished contacts with his colleagues worldwide, and became a doyen in the Chinese public sphere.

In the 1990s, more Chinese students had chances to study Oriental languages in West Germany. Jin Shoufu, now a professor of World History at Fudan University, studied Egyptology in Heidelberg from 1992 to 2000.⁴⁸ Jin translated his supervisor Jan Assmann's *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis*, and also Jacob Burckhardt's *Weltgeschichtliche Betrachtungen* into Chinese.⁴⁹ Shen Weirong, now a professor at Tsinghua University, studied Tibetology in Bonn from 1990 to 1998.⁵⁰ Shen has become very active in the Chinese public sphere as he advocates the method of philology in China. Borjigidai Oyunbilig, who is a native Mongolian scholar and now is a professor at Renmin University, did his doctoral dissertation on Manchu in Bonn from 1994 to 1998.⁵¹ Based in Beijing, Oyunbilig has established a global network of Mongolian studies with colleagues from Japan and Europe.⁵² Li Xuetao also belongs to this generation, as he studied Indology and Sinology in the 1990s in Bonn.⁵³ However, after

⁴⁸ Shoufu Jin, *Richten und Schlichten: Formen, Normen und Werte der altägyptischen Rechtskultur* (München: UVK Verlagsgesellschaft, 2014).

⁴⁹ [德] 杨·阿斯曼:《文化记忆:早期高级文化中的文字、回忆和政治身份》,北京大学出版社,2015年。Jan Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis. Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen* (München: C. H. Beck, 2007) [瑞士] 雅各布·布克哈特:《世界历史沉思录》,北京大学出版社,2007年。Jacob Burckhardt, *Weltgeschichtliche Betrachtungen* (München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1978).

⁵⁰ Weirong Shen, *Leben und historische Bedeutung des ersten Dalai Lama dGe 'dun grub pa dpal bzang po (1391-1474). Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der dGe lugs pa-Schule und der Institution der Dalai Lama* (Sankt Augustin: Steyler Verlag, 2002).

⁵¹ Oyunbilig Borjigidai, *Zur Überlieferungsgeschichte Des Berichts über Den Persönlichen Feldzug des Kangxi Kaisers Gegen Galdan (1696-1697)* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1999).

⁵² He is the chief-editor of international journals such as *Quaestiones Mongolorum Disputatae* (Tokyo-Japan) and *Oyirad Studies* (Budapest-Beijing).

⁵³ Xuetao Li, *Die Übertragung buddhistischer Sutras ins Chinesische: Theorie und Praxis am Beispiel von Zanning (919-1001)* (Gossenberg: Ostasien Verlag, 2019).

he returned to China, his academic pursuit became more “global”, as he established the Institute of Global History at Beijing Foreign Studies University.⁵⁴

As China’s economy boomed in the 2010s, more Chinese students could obtain a scholarship from CSC (China Scholarship Council) to study Oriental languages in Germany. Liu Changyu studied Assyriology in Heidelberg from 2011 to 2015, and now is an associate professor at Zhejiang Normal University.⁵⁵ In addition to his doctoral thesis, he has published a second book in English and become very active in the global circle of Assyriology.⁵⁶ Chen Hao, now an associate professor at Shanghai Jiao Tong University, studied Turkology in Berlin from 2012 to 2016.⁵⁷ At Free University of Berlin, he had a chance to make acquaintance with Sebastian Conrad. After returning to China, he translated and published Conrad’s *Globalgeschichte: Eine Einführung*. The second German book on Global History that he translated into Chinese is Osterhammel’s *Die Flughöhe der Adler*.

So, why do Orientalists in China play an active role in the trend of global history? First, “Global Historians” not necessarily have to deal with the “connections” between the “West” and the “Rest”. We can also write a “Global History” without the actor of Europe, such as the relationship between China and other oriental societies. Second, Oriental studies such as Turkology and Indology in China cannot be properly categorized as “World History” or “Chinese History”. In order to survive in the competitive academia jungle, they are more easily to embrace “Global History”. Third, the discipline of Oriental Studies in the past three hundred years has

⁵⁴ One of his recent publications, see Xuetao Li, *Geschichte der chinesischen Literatur*. Band 8, *Bibliographie zur chinesischen Literatur in deutscher Sprache* (Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2021).

⁵⁵ Changyu Liu, *Organization, Administrative Practices and Written Documentation in Mesopotamia during the Ur III Period (c. 2112-2004 BC): A Case Study of Puzriš-Dagan in the Reign of Amar-Suen* (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2017).

⁵⁶ Changyu Liu, *The Ur III Administrative Texts from Puzriš-Dagan Kept in the Harvard Museum of the Ancient Near East*, *Harvard Semitic Studies* 68 (Leiden: Brill, 2021).

⁵⁷ Hao Chen, *A History of the Second Türk Empire (ca. 682-745 AD)* (Leiden: Brill, 2021).

accumulated much knowledge about the “East”, enabling scholars to investigate the global entanglements between Asia and Europe. The situation in Germany is similar. We can cite quite a few German Global historians who also received their training in the department of Oriental studies: Jürgen Osterhammel and Dominic Sachsenmaier studied Sinology, and Sebastian Conrad studied Japanology.

V. CONCLUSION

Like elsewhere, the rise of Global History in China of course also has to do with China’s political and economic status, but we shall not ignore the impetus from the intellectual realm. Since the beginning of the 20th century, when the first generation of Chinese students started to study Oriental languages in Germany, the pursuit to catch up with the world’s mainstream academy has never been given up by the Chinese intellectuals. The endeavor to stage global publics was resumed again in the 1980s through interactions with a particular circle of scholars in the West, i.e., sinologists. The interest of Chinese readers has extensively extended from Sinology to World History after 2008 when more and more Chinese tourists started travelling to foreign countries. With the above three time-horizons, we can better understand the significance of the recent development of Global History in China.

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