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Introduction: Sinographic Literature Studies

Examining the Contemporary Landscape and Future Prospects

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In the 20th century we have witnessed the formation of a relatively stable Sinographic cultural sphere centered around China which also includes neighboring countries such as Korea, Japan, and Vietnam. Historically speaking, they share the literary medium of written Chinese and have similar “sense-perception, knowledge structures, and ethical viewpoints.”¹ Of course, other intellectuals outside East Asia but still within the Sinographic cultural sphere have also made considerable contributions to Sinographic studies. A holistic examination of such Sinographic literature would undoubtedly be of great value. First, the fact that Sinographic studies content tends to be rooted in traditional Chinese culture allows for an expansion of the study of Chinese classics themselves. Second, our reflections on “Chinese classics overseas” illustrates the profound impact exerted by Chinese culture, and must be regarded as a fruitful area of further development vis-à-vis world literature. As a subject located in a world driven by increasingly fast-paced global interconnectedness, literature studies must also reflect on and account for the influence of Western academia on its Asian counterpart. That is, we must not be satisfied merely with a view of world literature from a singular, Euro-centric nature, but should rather seek to introduce and embrace a view of global literatures that is pluralistic. The development of Chinese literature studies should not merely be a process of building on the legacy of past achievements, but should also reflect

1 Zhang Bowei 張伯偉, “Cong ‘xifang meiren’ dao ‘dongmen zhi nü’ 從“西方美人”到“東門之女”, in *Kua wenhua duihua* 跨文化對話, ed. Yue Daiyun 樂黛雲 and Qian Linsen 錢林森 (Beijing: Sanlian shudian, 2011), 28: 225–26.

the interactive experiences of its modern practitioners.² In a diverse linguistic environment such as the one we find ourselves in today, it is truly time for Sinographic literature studies to come to the fore. Scholarship must begin from within the Asian sphere as we evaluate salutary points of difference among similarities as well as similarities within points of difference.

Scholarship specifically from China had already made great strides in the field of Sinographic literature by the 1980s. The Taiwan region initially covered a rather small investigative scope limited to scholarly conferences and the investigation of Chinese language novels and literature. Scholarship on the Chinese mainland has continued its systematic investigation of Sinographic literature since the turn of the century. It has been guided by such paradigms as “viewing China from the periphery”³ and “Sinographic cultural sphere as methodology.”⁴ Chinese scholarship in more recent years has produced voluminous new material covering a diverse range of questions, including female-authored poems of the Korean Peninsula, Japanese commentary on *Shishuo xinyu* 世說新語, compilations of Vietnamese literary works, East Asian travel records, and conversations in written Chinese between scholars. Sinographic research continues to grow and bring new topics under its umbrella of research.

For this collection, four essays have been chosen that represent contemporary Chinese scholarship in the field of Sinographic cultural studies, particularly in the search for new questions and methodologies. It may also serve as an evocation to highlight future directions and areas of development in the field.

Zhang Bowei 張伯偉 evaluates the evolution of Sinographic scholarship in his thorough review and outlook on the field. It is Zhang’s view that China has long maintained a strong awareness of “outlying” Chinese literature as evidenced by numerous examples of the recording and circulation in China of Chinese-language literature originating from the Korean Peninsula, Japan, and other areas across numerous eras and dynasties. With the dawn of the 20th century and amid the changing backdrop of a shift from traditional to contemporary scholarship in China, contemporary scholars including Wang Guowei 王國維 (1877–1927), Chen Yinke 陳寅恪 (1890–1969), Hu Shi 胡適 (1891–1962), and Fu Sinian 傅斯年 (1896–1950) all demonstrated an awareness and

2 David Der-Wei Wang 王德威, “Shijie zhong’ de Zhongguo wenxue” “世界中”的中國文學, *Nanfang wentan* 南方文壇, no. 5 (2017): 6.

3 Ge Zhaoguang 葛兆光, “Yuliu, lichang yu fangfa – zhuixun wenshi yanjiu de xin shiye” 預流、立場與方法—追尋文史研究的新視野, *Fudan xuebao* 復旦學報, no. 2 (2007): 1–14.

4 Zhang Bowei 張伯偉, “Zuowei fangfa de Han wenhua quan” 作為方法的漢文化圈, *Zhongguo wenhua* 中國文化, no. 2 (2009): 107–13.

appreciation of outlying Chinese literature. Nevertheless, what we may consider inclusion of Sinographic literature studies into mainstream Chinese scholarship should be traced back to the early 1980s. Scholars from this era focused more on Sinographic literature as a source of new materials for pre-existing studies. Looking at the subject from an “Asian perspective” has had the utility of promoting new methodologies while resolving questions that “prior theories and methodologies would have found difficult to perfectly and satisfactorily resolve.” It is Zhang’s hope that future studies in the area will not just involve a more perfect organization of these new materials but will raise new questions about these new methodologies.

Qi Yongxiang 漆永祥 is concerned with the establishment of *Yanxinglu* 燕行錄 studies, that is, a body of literature composed by ministers and envoys to China mainly from the Korean Peninsula during the Goryeo (918–1392) and Joseon (1392–1910) dynasties. The *Yanxinglu* boasts nearly 750 authors of over 1000 individual diverse items of literature, including poems, travelogues, and diaries. Creation of the *Yanxinglu* took place in a period of around 700 years which Qi further subdivides into periods of creation, growth, formation, maturation, heyday, and decline. For each of these he provides a detailed explanation of their characteristics. Qi has adopted a methodology that emphasizes the importance of the following four principles: “the prioritization and analysis of material authenticity,” “sourcing, investigation, clarification, untangling of context,” “a methodical work of vertical and horizontal comparison and analysis,” as well as an “adoption of the local rather than ‘prejudicial foreign’ eye.”

Jin Chengyu 金程宇 undertakes a comparative analysis of the “Ribei dao ge” 日本刀歌, a famous poem reflecting relevant phenomena of discourse in Asian literature. For a considerable length of time it was considered to be authored by Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 (1007–1072). The first publication in opposition to this view was published during the 16th year of the Meiji era (1868–1912) by Japanese sinologist Kusaka Hiroshi 日下寬 (1852–1926), who argued the well-known poem to be the work of Song dynasty (960–1279) scholar Sima Guang 司馬光 (1019–1086). Kusaka Hiroshi’s point of view was then adopted by Yang Shoujing 楊守敬 (1839–1915), who promoted the same view in China as early as 1910. The “Ribei dao ge” itself is a reflection of the philosophies and perspectives of Japanese “lost and extant books” scholarship during the Edo era (1603–1868). Moreover, envoys from the Korean Peninsula to Japan are also found to have played an important role in terms of the poem’s dissemination throughout Japan. The “Ribei dao ge” has been a subject of lively discussion in Sinographic scholarship and even diplomatic circles given that “underlying [“Ribei dao ge”] is a focused response to the Chinese cultural topic of ‘seeking further insights when traditional cultural norms or propriety are in decline.’”

Bian Dongbo 卞东波 investigates the spread and impact of Tang (618–907) poet Zhang Ruoxu's 張若虛 classic poem “Chunjiang huayue ye” 春江花月夜 on the field of Sinographic literature in the near-modern period. The popularization and spread of Tang dynasty poetry collections in Japan and the Korean Peninsula during the Ming dynasty (1368–1644), and particularly the great popularity of the *Tangshi xuan* 唐詩選 during Japan's Edo era, coincided with a significant amount of scholarship and commentary from Edo Japan on the “Chunjiang huayue ye.” We may describe such works as “being mainly focused on aesthetic appreciation and evaluation,” and possessing “quite profound analytical depth.” At the same time, we find a significant number of works produced in China, Japan, and the Korean Peninsula clearly derivative of or using the same rhyme scheme as the “Chunjiang huayue ye.” It is Bian's view, after a rather detailed textual analysis, that “derivative works composed in China evidenced a high level of fidelity to the original poem, whereas by comparison those from Japan evince a remarkable profundity of thought with a great degree of crossover in terms of annotation and interpretation. On the other hand, the Korean Peninsula compositions seem to have been focused on the crafting of poems in the same meter, and all demonstrate a heavy integration of specifically Korean cultural elements.” It is upon this basis that Bian proposes several new questions and methodologies in response to Western theory. He also claims that, as a classic of Sinographic literature that has crossed significant geographical and temporal boundaries, the “Chunjiang huayue ye” should be regarded as a true token of world literature. This not only serves to promote further reflection on Western academic discourses via Asian literature, but the investigation of this engaging case study is also an effective attempt at bridging the gap between East Asian and world literature.

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