

Rethinking Asia in the Early Twentieth Century:  
Tagore and the East-West Debate on Modernity

Doctoral Dissertation

for

Cultural Interaction Studies,  
Graduate School of Letters, Kansai University

Yu-Ting Lee



## Acknowledgments

I never expected to come to Japan for my doctoral research. However, three years of study in this country have revealed to me how important Japan was, and still is, in contributing to the very idea of the East. It is in Japan that such issues as Asia, modernity, and world history have been receiving the finest elaboration outside Western academia. Personally, life in Japan has provided me with a great chance to understand its inextricable cultural, political, and economic relationship with Taiwan, my homeland. As for this dissertation, it is the outcome of the goodwill of many people. This project would not have been possible without support from the Institute of Cultural Interaction Studies, Kansai University, which has provided an excellent environment for research, employed me as research assistant, and subsidized my trips to China, India, and Canada for either fieldwork or international conferences. Most importantly, students here are of international backgrounds, and have been a constant source of cultural stimulation and intellectual commitment. Among the many people to whom I am deeply indebted, my deepest gratitude goes to two persons. Professor Demin Tao, my supervisor, not only helped me to understand Japan academically, but virtually carved out a historical dimension in my humanistic thinking, which are invaluable for broadening my horizons on the way towards a higher synthesis, and Professor Jenine Heaton, who demonstrated unparalleled patience in advising me on intellectual, linguistic, and cultural matters. I also owe thanks to three organizations that have supported me to explore both the academic world and this country that has become indispensable to my life: the Northern Osaka Foundation for Promoting Research (北大阪振興基金), the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (日本文部科学省), and the Fuji-Xerox Kobayashi Setsutarō Memorial Foundation (富士ゼロックス小林節太郎記念基金). I am especially grateful to the person who recommended me for study in Japan and made my wonderful experiences here possible: Professor Chun-chieh Huang at National Taiwan University.



# Rethinking Asia in the Early Twentieth Century: Tagore and the East-West Debate on Modernity

Introduction: Asia as an Idea in Modern Intellectual History.....	1
Part I. Tagore and His East-West Paradigm.....	7
Chapter 1. Tagore and Orientalism: Tagore Studies as a Focus of East-West Debate	
1.1 Tagore from the Perspective of Orientalism.....	9
1.2 Tagore's Global Reputation and Concomitant Issues.....	12
1.3 Orientalist Approach to Tagore: India and the West.....	16
1.4 Orientalist Approach to Tagore: Japan and China.....	24
1.5 Orientalism as an Omnipresent Factor.....	31
Chapter 2. Politics of Spirituality: Tagore's Concept of Asia	
2.1 Tagore the Spiritualist?.....	37
2.2 Eastern Mysticism in the Modern Western Psyche.....	39
2.3 Spirituality Claimed and Redefined: the East as Conceived by Tagore.	45
2.4 Asia in Modern World History: A Comparative Review.....	51
2.5 Tagore in the East-West Paradigm.....	59
Part II. Tagore and His "Eastern Asia": Japan.....	65
Chapter 3. Tagore's <i>Nihonjinron</i> and International Opinion on Asia in the Inter-War Period	
3.1 Overview.....	67
3.2 Intellectual Basis of <i>Nihonjinron</i> and Tagore's View of Japan.....	69
3.3 Tagore's "Nationalism in Japan" and Beyond.....	74
3.4 China, Japan, and Asia in the Eyes of Western Luminaries.....	80
3.5 Japan in Asia: An Intellectual Tension.....	86
Chapter 4. Changing Perspectives on Tagore in Modern Japanese Intellectual History	

4.1 Reception of Tagore in Japan.....	90
4.2 First Stage: The Years before 1941.....	92
4.3 Second Stage: The Years around Tagore's Centenary in 1961.....	100
4.4 Third Stage: The Years since the 1980s.....	105
4.5 A Century of "Tagore and Japan".....	108
 Part III. Tagore and His "Eastern Asia": China.....	111
 Chapter 5. The Chinese Experiences of Dewey, Russell, and Tagore during the May Fourth Era	
5.1 A Facet of Modern Chinese Intellectual History.....	113
5.2 The Visits of Many International Luminaries to China.....	115
5.3 Advice to China from Dewey, Russell, and Tagore.....	120
5.4 Foreign Visitors during the Intellectual Storm of May Fourth .....	127
5.5 Ripples in May Fourth Intellectual Trends.....	135
 Chapter 6. "Tagore and China" Reconsidered: Starting from a Conversation with Feng Youlan	
6.1 Reflection upon Studies on "Tagore and China".....	141
6.2 The Conversation between Tagore and Feng Youlan.....	145
6.3 Network of Thought Derived from the Conversation.....	151
6.4 A Comparison of Tagore with Chinese and Western Thinkers.....	157
6.5 Future Prospects for Studies on "Tagore and China".....	163
 Part IV. Asia in World Historical Narratives.....	167
 Chapter 7. On or Near the Axis: Construction of East Asia's Cultural Image in a Comparative Frame	
7.1 Theoretical Setting	
7.1.1 Objective.....	169
7.1.2 East Asia as a Research Paradigm.....	170
7.1.3 China on the Axis versus Japan near the Axis.....	172
7.2 The Axial Age Breakthrough and the Chinese Case	
7.2.1 Basic Characteristics of the Axial Age.....	175
7.2.2 The Axial Age Breakthrough in China: A Historical View.....	178

7.2.3 China in the Axial Age: A Critical Review.....	182
7.3 Reformulation of the Axial Age Theory and Japanese Civilization	
7.3.1 Japan as a Unique Civilization.....	183
7.3.2 Development of Eisenstadt's Theory of Comparative Civilizations.	185
7.3.3 Japan's Non-Axial Transformation: A Sociological View.....	188
7.4 East Asia in a Comparative Frame	
7.4.1 Critical Evaluation of the Axial Age Theory.....	192
7.4.2 East Asia around the Chinese Axis?.....	195
 Chapter 8. Arguing the East in the Modern World	
8.1 World History as a Modern Western Genre.....	198
8.2 The East as Characterized by Westerners.....	203
8.3 The East as Characterized by Easterners: Japan.....	206
8.4 The East as Characterized by Easterners: China and India.....	212
 Conclusion: Asia in Cultural Interaction Studies.....	223
 Bibliography.....	227
 Index.....	253

# Introduction:

## Asia as an Idea in Modern Intellectual History

### **Research purpose**

From its first inscription on an Assyrian stele, the term “Asia,” which signifies “the place of sunrise,” has had a history of over three millennia. As the so-called modern world gradually took shape from the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Asia has also acquired new meanings that are both complex and ambiguous. This dissertation focuses on the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, a time when interaction between the East and the West in many aspects reached a peak, and explores how Asia—as a major reference for Europe—has assumed a specific cultural identity in world historical narratives through both passive representation and active identification.

The Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) played a remarkable role in the theorization of Asia. After winning the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1913, he travelled around the world, criticizing modern Western civilization as being plagued by materialism and nationalism, and proposing Eastern civilization as spiritual remedy. While this process and the content of Tagore’s discourse have received much elaboration, by examining Tagore’s relationship with various distinct contexts, the dissertation aims at a systematic analysis of the conflicting views of “the East” or “Asia” in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Before specifying the methods, structure, and content of the dissertation, I will briefly define its scope.

### **Research scope**

Though Tagore is the central figure of the dissertation, this is not a monograph of Tagore studies in the sense that it does not delve into biographical details, nor does it dissect Tagore’s literary works or his artistic, social, and philosophical thought. Focusing on Tagore’s civilizational discourse, this dissertation seeks to analyze Tagore’s formulation of such ideas as “Asia,” “modernity,” and “nationalism” when addressing a West-centric world order, and to examine how Tagore’s views contributed to the remaking of the above



notions. That Tagore can serve as a nexus for a wide-range intellectual network in the modern world is largely due to his earning the Nobel Prize in 1913, a drama I will analyze in detail as one of the mechanisms of Orientalism. Furthermore, the dissertation explores how Tagore has been evaluated in different countries, and how this process has contributed considerable complexity and nuances to the making of “Asia” in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Therefore, it seems appropriate to define this project as a study of “intellectual history” or, more precisely, “the history of ideas,” with “world history” being the ultimate conceptual category in which both Eastern and Western countries have attempted to gain discursive vantage, whether from the opposite or the same hemisphere. Nonetheless, I do not intend to trace these key ideas—Asia, modernity, nationalism, and world history—to their origins, nor will I exhaust their historical variations. What is attempted in this dissertation is the contextualization of these ideas in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, a time when Tagore’s voice was among one of the prominent opinions.

Accordingly, I have used many of Tagore’s own English writings, including those translated from Bengali by himself, as primary sources. My lack of proficiency in the Bengali language no doubt obstructs full appreciation of Tagore’s profundity. However, for the historical period in question, it can be claimed that Tagore’s English writings suffice for an in-depth discussion, as he was obliged to convey his cultural vision to the world through this *lingua franca*. The limited awareness of Tagore has been, as I will emphatically argue, also due to this language that was not native to Tagore. Here I will quote a paragraph from Ramachandra Guha’s introduction to the 2009 Penguin reprint of Tagore’s *Nationalism* to justify my own focus:

This essay has, somewhat deliberately, ignored Tagore’s creative oeuvre—his poems, plays, novels and songs by which he is best known and which are most especially revered in his native Bengal. There, his views on the social and political questions of the day appear indirectly, by allusion. It is in his lesser-known essays and lectures that he writes more directly on such matters as nationalism and internationalism, and the conflict and cooperation of cultures. Admittedly, this methodological focus was also mandated by a linguistic deficiency. I do not know Bengali, so many of the nuances of Tagore’s fiction and

(especially) poetry would be lost in translation. But I console myself that it is in his non-fiction that we are more likely to find *the Tagore who speaks to the world*.<sup>1</sup>

In the same vein, this dissertation attempts to explore “the Tagore who speaks to the world.” As will be revealed, nevertheless, in the contemporary world, those socio-politically oriented essays and lectures of Tagore are by no means “lesser-known” as understood by Guha. On the contrary, while many Indians—particularly the Bengali circles—appreciate Tagore through his artistic expression, the poet reemerges in a global forum today primarily because of his civilizational vision and criticism. What historical process has contributed to this schism of Tagore’s images in different corners of the world? This is the question I will be trying to address in various analytical frameworks.

## **Research methods**

Given the scope and characteristics of the dissertation as delineated above, to relate Tagore to the crystallization, or perhaps complication, of the idea of Asia, this dissertation adopts three interconnected approaches to sketch the East-West paradigm prevalent in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, which was defined geographically, culturally, as well as ideologically.

First, a documentary approach. Both primary and secondary materials are extensively referenced. The former, some of which are only available in India, are used for a nuanced study of Tagore’s civilizational discourse, whereas the latter are drawn upon to examine the diversity of evaluation of Tagore in different parts of the world. This diversity, to a great extent, is connected with the various ways of perceiving and imagining the East.

Second, a historical approach. Based on textual analyses, the dissertation attempts to present the complex process of exchange of ideas between intellectuals worldwide, with Tagore as nexus. Apart from demonstrating the conflicting nature of some heated ideas, I will also modify some simplistic conclusions about Tagore’s thought found in previous research.

Third, a theoretical approach. Viewed against a broader backdrop, Tagore’s

---

<sup>1</sup> Ramachandra Guha, “Introduction: Travelling with Tagore,” in Rabindranath Tagore, *Nationalism* (New Delhi: Penguin Books, 2009), p.xlix. My italics.

civilizational discourse is an antithesis to a West-centric philosophy of history and theories of modernity. Therefore, an examination of how Asia has been characterized by the West since the Enlightenment and how Asians have reacted to the often biased image is necessary. Such discussions will show that the crystallization of the East-West paradigm is a process of mutual recognition and imagination.

### **Dissertation structure**

The dissertation is divided into four parts and contains eight chapters in total. The two chapters of Part I define the core issues of the project, examining the formulation of Tagore's East-West paradigm and the mythologizing of his image in many parts of the world. The West, chiefly Britain, and India were naturally the main stages for Tagore's cultural endeavors, a fact that has been thoroughly studied. Nevertheless, a synthetic perspective is attempted in this part to analyze the rise and fall of Tagore's global reputation on broader historical and theoretical grounds.

While Western factors often weigh more than Eastern ones in Tagore's civilizational discourse owing to the imbalance in power structure at the time, the importance of the latter is not overlooked. The four chapters of Parts II and III delve into the intricate relationships between Tagore and the modern intellectual histories of China and Japan—the two countries dearest to him to form an Asian unity with India—which are more complicated and intellectually inspiring than demonstrated by previous research.

The two chapters of Part IV bring the historical reconstruction into a larger context, comparing how the three main actors of Asia—namely, China, India, and Japan—have been depicted in modern world historical narratives, based on their respective historical backgrounds, geographical conditions, and relative relationships with the West. This part seeks to strengthen previous arguments by demonstrating how the idea of Asia was triggered by non-Asian standards.

### **Dissertation content**

Part I of the dissertation, "Tagore and His East-West Paradigm," is composed of Chapters 1 and 2:

Chapter 1 critically reviews the making of Tagore's public image and concomitant studies of him. By exploring the ideological premises that have undergirded interpretations of the Indian poet for nearly a century, this chapter demonstrates that many of the regional, temporal, and thematic ramifications of the topic are, on a deeper theoretical level, closely related to different ways of conceiving and projecting the East, which constitute different types of Orientalism.

Chapter 2 deals with the three overarching ideas of "spirituality," "Asia," and "modern world history," and delves into three corresponding spaces of discourse: Western comments on Tagore around the time of his rise to fame, Tagore's view of Eastern and Western civilizations, and world historical narratives prevalent in his time. By focusing on Tagore, this chapter aims to sketch a brief history of the formulation of the idea, or ideology, of Asia in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Part II of the dissertation, "Tagore and His Eastern Asia: Japan," is composed of Chapters 3 and 4:

Chapter 3 characterizes Tagore's view of Japan as *Nihonjinron* (theory of Japaneseness), and compares it to the comments of such Western luminaries as John Dewey (1859-1952) and Bertrand Russell (1872-1970) to examine how Asia was differently valued by Eastern and Western thinkers respectively in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Such differences were determined by their intellectual backgrounds, political stances, and personal feelings for the future prospects of Asia.

Chapter 4 examines the major trends of modern Japanese intellectual history through the refraction of Tagore. Tagore was admired in Japan as the first Nobel laureate from Asia, but his warning against Japan's Westernization irritated many Japanese in 1916. After the defeat of WWII, however, Tagore's message was earnestly reviewed in Japan, and he has become an inspiring figure in the current age of globalization. This chapter traces these vicissitudes through textual evidence.

Part III of the dissertation, "Tagore and His Eastern Asia: China," is composed of Chapters 5 and 6:

Chapter 5 focuses on the Chinese experiences of John Dewey, Bertrand Russell, and Rabindranath Tagore during the May Fourth period. Owing to the peculiar cultural milieu at the time, these visitors were often involved in

domestic debates either directly or indirectly. The reactions of Chinese intellectuals to these visitors were usually more political than intellectual, foreshadowing the sharp turn taken afterwards in modern Chinese history. Moreover, the artificiality of the idea of Asia is observable through comparing the lectures of Dewey, Russell, and Tagore in Japan and in China.

Chapter 6 reconstructs the relationship between Tagore and modern Chinese intellectual history. This attempt comes from an observation that current research on Tagore conducted by Chinese scholars is often too limited in perspective, with Tagore's 1924 controversial visit to China occupying most of the attention. I have addressed this problem by comparing Tagore's discourse with that of many contemporary Chinese and Westerners to unveil a wider intellectual frame.

Part IV of the dissertation, "Asia in World Historical Narratives," is composed of Chapters 7 and 8:

Chapter 7 reflects on the axial age theory, one of the world historical narratives produced in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Although the theory is not exempt from West-centricity and attaches different values to China and Japan according to their degrees of modernization, its comparative frame can possibly be adapted to the idea of East Asia, which is gaining prominence in the study of world history and is expected to provide a non-Western geo-cultural paradigm.

Chapter 8 surveys how the East features in the modern world historical genre. While China has not much in common with India, they were generally regarded as the two pillars of ancient Eastern civilization and thus as essentially different from the West and Japan. Critically, the knowledge-power structure of "world history" as a genre became all the more conspicuous when imperial Japan tried to challenge West-centricity in its own narratives. By comparing the views of Chinese, Indian, Japanese, and Western thinkers, this chapter shows a critical episode in the remaking of "the East" in the modern world.

Part I  
Tagore and His East-West Paradigm



# 1. Tagore and Orientalism: Tagore Studies as a Focus for East-West Debate

## 1.1 Tagore from the Perspective of Orientalism

This chapter reviews various traditions of research on Rabindranath Tagore. As the title suggests, the review is not a comprehensive bibliographical survey, but aims to examine the relationship between Tagore's words, knowledge about him, and Orientalism as a way of thinking and representation.

The current review is contextualized temporally: academic and cultural organizations around the world just celebrated the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Tagore in 2011. Many symposia, recitation gatherings, and painting exhibitions were held to commemorate the poet's multifaceted talents and to discuss the relevance of his thought to the age of globalization. Furthermore, 2013 is the centenary of Tagore's receipt of the Nobel Prize in Literature, an event that surprised the world a century ago and made Tagore the most renowned Easterner at the time. This honor, however, was not without drawbacks. Outside of India, Tagore is mainly observed through the prism of "the East" or "Asia," which to a great extent has reduced his versatility to a "spiritual," "mystic," and "anti-Western" monochrome, although exploration of Tagore's works indicates that such epithets cannot be applied uncritically.

Against this backdrop, I argue that Orientalism is a useful concept for examining how the evaluation of Tagore has fluctuated in the past hundred years. Orientalism, which signifies not only a discipline but a European practice of ideological connotations, is defined by Edward Said (1935-2003) as follows in his 1978 *magnum opus*:

Orientalism is a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between "the Orient" and (most of the time) "the Occident."<sup>1</sup>

In more political terms, Orientalism is "a Western style for dominating,

---

<sup>1</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin Books, 2003), p.2.



restructuring, and having authority over the Orient.”<sup>2</sup> Said drew on such ideas as Antonio Gramsci’s (1891-1937) “hegemony” and Michel Foucault’s (1926-1984) “discourse” to explain the Western effort to assume a cultural vantage over the non-Western world and sustain that superiority through textual exactitude and intellectual conviction. Since the process under discussion derives from a time-honored cultural endeavor that finds one of its ancient origins in Herodotus’ (484?-425? BCE) *Histories*, it would be methodologically improper to force an analogy between Orientalism as a large-scale project and Tagore as an individual case. Nevertheless, if we define Orientalism as essentially a way of thinking about the Orient based on its presumed differences with the Occident, Tagore certainly embodies a nexus of various practices that juxtapose East and West.

One more caveat is necessary here. Although Said fully recognized the immensity of the Orient and that much of the expanse is more or less subject to European (and later American) scrutiny and representation, he restricted his discussion to the Islamic world, as its geographical proximity to Europe has long provoked the latter’s anxiety, enmity, and exotic imagination. India, in contrast, constitutes another kind of Orientalist project owing to an inherent political disorder that rendered it vulnerable to European rivalries and political control.<sup>3</sup> In Said’s subsequent exploration of the problem of image-making in the West-centric power structure, India, along with other non-Western regions, is given a more in-depth account. Said generalizes the issue as follows: “What are striking in these discourses are the rhetorical figures one keeps encountering in their descriptions of ‘the mysterious East,’ as well as the stereotypes about ‘the African [or Indian or Irish or Jamaican or Chinese] mind’.”<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, Tagore’s criticism of nationalism has been cited as a brilliant example of “resistance culture.”<sup>5</sup> For Tagore, nationalism is not a convenient anti-colonialist tool, but rather is a product of Western capitalism and materialism that should be kept from. It is on this humanistic ground that

---

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p.3.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p.75.

<sup>4</sup> Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993), p.xi. The words in brackets are Said’s. For a meticulous study of India and European Orientalist projects, see Raymond Schwab, Gene Patterson-Black and Victor Reinking trs., *The Oriental Renaissance: Europe’s Rediscovery of India and the East, 1680-1880* (New York: Columbia UP, 1984). Said does not say much about the relationship between India and Orientalism in his foreword to the English version, which might indicate that he had not yet been engaged in this topic at such an early date (prior to 1984). See pp.vii-xx.

<sup>5</sup> Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p.215.

Tagore differentiated a “spiritual East” from a “materialistic West.” Yet he was never sparing in admiration for the West’s indefatigable search for scientific and technological progress, as long as such advances remained in the service of humanity.

Despite his attack on the Western system of nation-state, Tagore was also a nationalist in the broadest sense in that he strove for an independent India. But such independence was to be premised upon harmonization of the ancient Indian spirit with modern scientific facilities, a vision of which Isaiah Berlin’s (1909-1997) praise is worth quoting at some length:

A not dissimilar problem seems to me, from what I have read in Tagore, to have faced India towards the end of last century [i.e. the 19<sup>th</sup> century]; and he never showed his wisdom more clearly than in choosing the difficult middle path, drifting neither to the Scylla of radical modernism, nor to the Charybdis of proud and gloomy traditionalism. (I know that some have thought Tagore to have yielded too much to the West. I confess that I did not find this so in those of his works that I could read in English. He seems to me to have kept to the centre.)<sup>6</sup>

Berlin and Said are among those few leading intellectuals who are not Tagore experts but regard his thought as having universal value rather than merely embodying local concerns. Berlin admired the difficult path that Tagore chose, but the parenthesized note is somewhat simplistic. Actually, Tagore was considered no less a cultural conservative than an Occidentophile, depending on the standpoints of his critics. As both the global environment and domestic situations have changed through time, the reception of Tagore in different parts of the world also has undergone transformation. Many of these transformations, nonetheless, are epistemologically connected with Orientalism: while views on Tagore are deeply grounded in local experience and change with historical conditions, what remains unaltered seems to be a division between the two hemispheres, which are claimed to be the most problematic categories of the

---

<sup>6</sup> Isaiah Berlin, “Rabindranath Tagore and the Consciousness of Nationality,” in *The Sense of Reality: Studies in Ideas and Their History* (London: Pimlico, 1996), p.260.

meta-geographical imagination.<sup>7</sup>

Furthermore, although scholars like Berlin and Said do not reference geographical constraints when evaluating Tagore's ideas, their sole focus on his nationalist critique also betrays the fundamental Orientalist treatment that Tagore has received. This bias, however, is historically attributable to Tagore himself. This chapter comprises a review of this history and the development of various conventions of Tagore studies that reveal how the East-West debate has, explicitly or implicitly, weighed on the world's cognition of Tagore for a century.<sup>8</sup>

## 1.2 Tagore's Global Reputation and Concomitant Issues

In the article "Restoring Rabindranath Tagore," Mary Lago (1919-2001) claims that "[t]he most persistent myth, which began to adhere from the very beginning of his Western career and has done lingering harm, is that of Tagore as latter-day Wise Man from the East."<sup>9</sup> As this statement weaves together key terms that characterize Tagore's international career—not only in the West but virtually everywhere outside India—it serves as a fine start for an analysis of the formulation of Tagore's international image.

Rabindranath Tagore was born to an aristocratic family in 1861 in Kolkata (known as Calcutta before 2001). Well connected to the colonial government and the British East India Company, Tagore's family background exposed him to both traditional Indian classics and the modern Western disciplines of art, humanities, and sciences, and rooted his sensitivity in the tension between East and West. Given this intellectual cultivation, the awarding of the Nobel Prize in 1913 to Tagore made him a ready spokesperson for the East. Travelling and

---

<sup>7</sup> Martin Lewis and Karen Wigen, *The Myth of Continents: A Critique of Metageography* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1997), p.x.

<sup>8</sup> Using Orientalism as a theoretical framework is not new to Tagore studies. For example, both Ana Jelnikar and Huang Wei-lin 黃威霖 adopt Orientalist criticisms extensively in their analyses. This paper focuses on the historical process of Tagore's being "Orientalized," dealing with theorization in the final section. For the two references, see Ana Jelnikar, "W. B. Yeats's (Mis)Reading of Tagore: Interpreting an Alien Culture," in Kathleen M. O'Connell and Joseph T. O'Connell eds., *Rabindranath Tagore: Reclaiming a Cultural Icon* (Kolkata: Visva-Bharati, 2009), pp.318-344; Huang Wei-lin, *Wenmingchayi yu xiandaixing: Taigeer de zhengzhilixiang jiqi dui Zhongguowenming de qipan* 文明差異與現代性—泰戈爾的政治理想及其對中國文明的期盼 (Civilizational Differences and Modernity: Rabindranath Tagore's Political Ideals and His Perspective on Chinese Civilization) (Taipei: Department of Political Science, National Taiwan University, 2011), especially Chapter 3, "Dongfang wenming yu fan Yazhou zhuyi" 東方文明與泛亞洲主義 (Eastern Civilization and Pan-Asianism).

<sup>9</sup> Mary Lago, "Restoring Rabindranath Tagore," in Mary Lago and Ronald Warwick eds., *Rabindranath Tagore: Perspectives in Time* (London: Macmillan, 1989), p.5.

lecturing around the world subsequently became routine. With a sense of mission when speaking to the devastating results of WWI, Tagore eagerly preached the spiritual superiority of Eastern civilization, which in his eyes provided a remedy for a modern Western culture characterized by materialism and nationalism.

Obviously, the cultural mission on which Tagore embarked hinged on a crucial episode, that is, the surprising 1913 Nobel Prize in Literature, which followed his sensational popularity in and beyond London from 1912 and was claimed as “one of the genuine romances of literary history.”<sup>10</sup> According to a letter from Tagore to his niece dated May, 6, 1913, he began translating *Gitanjali* (song offerings) into English in March, 1912, when his trip to England was postponed by a sudden illness. He boarded the ship in May and continued the translation. When Tagore arrived in London and gave the manuscripts to his painter friend William Rothenstein (1872-1945), whom he had known in Kolkata years earlier, they were passed with great enthusiasm to W. B. Yeats (1865-1939). The Irish poet then wrote an introduction and edited the poems for publication in September;<sup>11</sup> “from there on you know the story”<sup>12</sup>—Tagore referred to the extraordinary welcome he received in the same letter. What is more, he became the first Nobel laureate from Asia half a year later. Introductory or scholarly publications on Tagore in languages other than Bengali appeared in abundance for several years after the event.

On the English translation of *Gitanjali*, Tagore admitted that “[e]ven today I cannot grasp how I wrote it and how people have liked it so much.”<sup>13</sup> As Tagore seems to have been unprepared for his phenomenal popularity in the West, Yeats’ effusive praise in his introduction to *Gitanjali* might lend some insight into the “romance”:

We write long books where no page perhaps has any quality to make writing a pleasure, being confident in some general design, just as we fight and make money and fill our heads with politics—all dull things in the doing—while Mr. Tagore, like the Indian civilization itself, has

---

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> Rabindranath Tagore’s letter to Indira Devi Chaudhurani, in Krishna Dutta and Andrew Robinson eds., *Selected Letters of Rabindranath Tagore* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997), pp.117-118.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p.118.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p.117.

been content to discover the soul and surrender himself to its spontaneity.<sup>14</sup>

The stark contrast between Western and Indian civilizations finds expressions in “general design” *versus* “spontaneity,” and “fight and make money” *versus* “discover the soul.” Yeats’ appreciation for Tagore probably stemmed from his own affinity for mysticism, personal political orientation, and fatigue with modern civilization.<sup>15</sup> Yet it was not uncommon for contemporary Western critics to take what they imagined as the Indian spirit to be antidotal to a Western civilization frayed with political and commercial competitions.

Soon after *Gitanjali*, a series of lectures given at Harvard in February, 1913 were published as *Sadhana*, which also circulated widely in the West, especially in America and England. The book bears a subtitle, *The Realisation of Life*, and contains Tagore’s own interpretation of the Upanishads and the teachings of Buddha that “have ever been things of the spirit, and therefore endowed with boundless vital growth.”<sup>16</sup> Through these lectures, Tagore hoped that “western readers will have an opportunity of coming into touch with the ancient spirit of India as revealed in our sacred texts and manifested in the life of to-day,”<sup>17</sup> a wish to reverse an observed tendency of mummifying the religious scriptures of India in Western academia. Nevertheless, the publication of *Sadhana* also brought unexpected repercussions: “Mystical poems are private balm for the restless soul, but prose exposition elicits rebuttal.”<sup>18</sup> In other words, what was implied in *Gitanjali* was made into argumentative form, thus drawing disputation. Moreover, “*Sadhana* marked Tagore as the Man with a Message,”<sup>19</sup> which did Tagore “lingering harm” as he would never be appreciated *qua* poet ever again.

---

<sup>14</sup> W. B. Yeats, “Introduction,” in Rabindranath Tagore, *Gitanjali: Song Offerings* (London: Macmillan, 1913), p.xx. For a critical reading of Yeats’ Orientalist message in his introduction to *Gitanjali*, see Ana Jelnikar’s article mentioned in note 8.

<sup>15</sup> Comparison between Tagore and Yeats constitutes the subject of many essays, each highlighting different aspects. Apart from Ana Jelnikar’s article mentioned in note 8, see also Harold M. Hurwitz, “Yeats and Tagore,” in *Comparative Literature*, Vol. 16, No. 1 (Winter, 1964), pp. 55-64; Louise Blakeney Williams, “Overcoming the ‘Contagion of Mimicry’: The Cosmopolitan Nationalism and Modernist History of Rabindranath Tagore and W. B. Yeats,” in *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 112, No. 1 (Feb., 2007), pp. 69-100.

<sup>16</sup> Rabindranath Tagore, *Sadhana: Realisation of Life* (New York: Macmillan, 1913), p.viii.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p.vii.

<sup>18</sup> Mary Lago, “Restoring Rabindranath Tagore,” in Mary Lago and Ronald Warwick eds., *Rabindranath Tagore: Perspectives in Time*, p.14.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

In brief, the accolades Tagore received in the West not only divided his life into two contrasting periods—from that of a locally (not even nationally) known poet to a world-famous thinker or preacher—but also presupposed an East-West dichotomy in the world's perception of him.<sup>20</sup> It is to this simplistic understanding that Mary Lago addressed her article, "Restoring Rabindranath Tagore." But a reasonable question is: what can we restore to Tagore if his image has long been biased? Historically, since much of Tagore's versatility, including social criticism and educational reform, found expression (and markets) after his achievement of worldwide acclaim—not to mention that Tagore half-willingly adapted himself to the niche that the West created for him—it would be difficult to construct a more polymorphous image of Tagore outside India without his primary identity as an Eastern messenger. Culturally, infatuation with Tagore's exoticism proved momentary. As Lago pointed out, Western readers soon asked for something more than the romantic mysticism of *Gitanjali*, and it was in the competition for reviews and bookshelves that Tagore unknowingly lost the race and dragged further and further behind modern writers such as T. S. Eliot (1888-1965), Ezra Pound (1885-1972), James Joyce (1882-1941), and D. H. Lawrence (1885-1930).<sup>21</sup> Indeed, as early as the 1920s, Edward Thompson (1886-1946), an early Western biographer of Tagore, had perceived a possible miscontextualization of Tagore in the contemporary cultural milieu: "I have remembered always that Tagore...as a writer was the contemporary of the later Tennyson and Browning and Robert Bridges. In fairness, he must be judged as the Victorian poets are judged, whose world has passed away."<sup>22</sup>

Of course, more complicated factors are accountable for Tagore's fall from

---

<sup>20</sup> In a newly published biography that sketches Tagore's intellectual life rather than his experiences, the author still has to acknowledge the impact of the event on Tagore's public image while playing down the importance of the Nobel Prize: "For the common man, the decade 1909-1919 was, of course, chiefly remarkable because of the celebrated event, the award of the Nobel Prize in 1913. At this time Tagore was just harvesting the fruits of his work earlier and getting them translated for a foreign readership. In terms of his intellectual life, it is doubtful if this episode was significant. However, these English translations, sometimes edited by his intellectual associates in England, were significant in representing Tagore as the 'spiritual' poet of the East." Sabyasachi Bhattacharya, *Rabindranath Tagore: An Interpretation* (New Delhi: Viking, 2011), p.13.

<sup>21</sup> Mary Lago, "Restoring Rabindranath Tagore," in Mary Lago and Ronald Warwick eds., *Rabindranath Tagore: Perspectives in Time*, p.19.

<sup>22</sup> Edward Thompson, *Rabindranath Tagore: Poet and Dramatist* (S.l.: Pierides Press, 2008), p.vii. This book was first published in 1926, and revised and reissued in 1946. Thompson had another title prior to this, *Rabindranath Tagore: His Life and Work*, which was published in 1921.

grace in the eyes of Western readers. As widely noted, Yeats' wishful representation of Tagore as an otherworldly figure, Tagore's own omission in his translation of the parts that he considered would be difficult for Westerners to understand, and the filtering out of his modernist works (most of them novels) by Western publishers all contributed to the monochromatic image of Tagore as a mystic. With the publication in 1917 of *Nationalism*, which criticizes West-originated nationalism from the angle of humanistic universalism, "he had become a political voice that seemed to be setting East against West. To many, he was a Christ-figure turned Jeremiah."<sup>23</sup>

Clearly, on both a cultural and political level, Tagore became characterized as a messenger from the East, an image that remains to the present day despite the vicissitudes of Tagore's reputation. But what was the East and how was it defined in contradistinction with the West? Since Tagore established himself as the representative of the East by virtue of a reputation earned in the West, this dichotomy became more a premise than a hypothesis for his thought. His views also contradicted the perceptions of other Eastern cultures, notably Japan and China. Moreover, the West itself is a problematic notion. A considerable portion of Western discussions on Tagore are of English or American origins, and Tagore's observation of the West was largely shaped by his intimacy with English culture through colonial rule. By exploring different responses to Tagore in various parts of the world, the following sections reveal how the East-West dichotomy has pervaded those discourses. Though far from being comprehensive, this examination clarifies how the idea of the East or Asia, presumably geographical and cultural, has been mainly devised for political ends, as *Orientalism* argues.

### 1.3 Orientalist Approach to Tagore: India and the West

Orientalism might not be the optimal approach to Tagore in India, where Tagore's fellow countrymen are more able and willing to view him in a real-life context. Nonetheless, analysis of some interrelated discussions on Tagore in India will make it clear that, in many cases, Westerners are the presumed readers of those studies that frequently address what is said about Tagore in the

---

<sup>23</sup> Mary Lago, "Restoring Rabindranath Tagore," in Mary Lago and Ronald Warwick eds., *Rabindranath Tagore: Perspectives in Time*, p.16.

West. Therefore, by looking at India and the West together, this section attempts to demonstrate how contrasting images of Tagore and a continuum of views on him coexist paradoxically.

Ashis Nandy once said that “as you well know, all Bengali intellectuals are automatically Tagore scholars.”<sup>24</sup> Though facetious, Nandy’s remark is indicative of how local Bengalis are treating Tagore as an icon: familiarity with his works constitutes an essential part of cultural literacy in the Bengali-speaking region.<sup>25</sup> Such fervor is also evident in an article from *The Guardian*:

No other language group reveres a writer as 250 million Bengali-speakers do Tagore. Shakespeare and Dickens don’t come into the picture; the popularity of Burns in Scotland 100 years ago may be his nearest equivalent in Britain.<sup>26</sup>

In sharp contrast to this zeal is the indifference to Tagore in the English-speaking world today, for which there is statistical evidence: neither the Oxford nor Penguin editions of dictionaries of quotations, for example, contain anything by Tagore.<sup>27</sup> This absence appears ironic compared with Yeats’ claim of *Gitanjali* that “as the generations pass, travellers will hum them on the highway and men rowing upon rivers.”<sup>28</sup> Another reminder to reinforce the irony is that in 1936, Yeats still included seven of Tagore’s poems in *The Oxford Book of Modern Verse*, although he was no longer as enchanted with

---

<sup>24</sup> Ashis Nandy, “Violence and Creativity in the Late Twentieth Century: Rabindranath Tagore and the Problem of Testimony,” in Patrick Colm Hogan and Lalita Pandit eds., *Rabindranath Tagore: Universality and Tradition* (Madison: Associated University Presses, 2003), p.264.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. “For millions of Indians and Bangladeshis, Rabindranath Tagore is at present, as he was in his lifetime, a cultural icon.” See “Introduction,” in Kathleen M. O’Connell and Joseph T. O’Connell eds., *Rabindranath Tagore: Reclaiming a Cultural Icon*, p.11. Aware that “icon” does not always assume a positive meaning, the editors nonetheless refer readers to the cultural, religious, and political sophistication that the term can embody. This volume is based on a 2008 conference at the University of Toronto, which heralded a series of events celebrating Tagore’s 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary. See also *University of Toronto Quarterly*, Vol.77, No.4 (Fall, 2008).

<sup>26</sup> Ian Jack, “Rabindranath Tagore was a global phenomenon, so why is he neglected?” See: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2011/may/07/rabindranath-tagore-why-was-he-neglected>.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.* By chance, the journalist remembers one line and one stanza, but he avows that “I owe this knowledge to (a) a tourist guide in Agra, and (b) to a biography. Reading Tagore himself had nothing to do with it.”

<sup>28</sup> W. B. Yeats, “Introduction,” in Rabindranath Tagore, *Gitanjali: Song Offerings*, p.xv.



Tagore at that time as he had been in the 1910s.<sup>29</sup>

The journalist asks “why is he neglected?” on May, 7, 2011, that is, Tagore’s 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Personally he had listened in Kolkata to some bureaucrats complain for hours about how impossible it is to approach Tagore from English translations, an anecdote that reflects an awareness among Bengalis of the cultural differences between themselves and outsiders. Revealing the opposing images of Tagore in India and in Britain, this report was partly motivated by Amartya Sen, who was giving a talk at the British Museum to remind his audiences of Tagore’s legacies on the eve of the poet’s birthday.

Whether Amartya Sen claims the title of Tagore scholar is dubitable. Nevertheless, there are multiple bonds between the two Bengali luminaries: Sen’s grandfather shared an intellectual partnership with Tagore; he himself received secondary education at the institution established by Tagore; the 1998 Nobel Prize in Economics also obliges Sen to make critical comments on his predecessor.<sup>30</sup> In “Tagore and His India,” Sen, like every concerned scholar, notes the discrepancy in publicity about Tagore in his homeland and in the rest of the world today,<sup>31</sup> and considers the de-mythologizing of Tagore his primary task. Conscious of Tagore’s complexity and inner contradictions, he seeks to demonstrate a Tagore of maximum elasticity without sacrificing fundamental principles. Inevitably, such recognition was easily eclipsed by convenient labels such as “spiritualist” or “anti-modernist,” and in more than one aspect Amartya Sen observes what Isaiah Berlin pointed out as “the difficult middle path” that Tagore chose.

An ambitious attempt to portray Tagore as a Renaissance figure is a 1995 biography, *Rabindranath Tagore: The Myriad-Minded Man*.<sup>32</sup> Indeed, the

---

<sup>29</sup> W. B. Yeats ed., *The Oxford Book of Modern Verse: 1892-1935* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1936), pp.63-67. See Chapter 2 for a thorough discussion of this issue.

<sup>30</sup> Actually, it has become an honor to have Amartya Sen contribute an introduction or piece to to-be-published volumes on Tagore. This emotion is well expressed in a 2011 volume, *Tagore and China*. One of the editors, Tan Chung, recalls in his own introduction that “when Amartya promised to contribute to our volume, my friends, especially those in China, had been overwhelmed by the good news as if we had won a big prize.” See Tan Chung and Amiya Dev eds., *Tagore and China* (New Delhi: SAGE, 2011), p.xxvii. Another motive for requesting a contribution from Amartya Sen to this volume was that his grandfather, Kshiti Mohan Sen, was among the five members who accompanied Tagore on his 1924 China trip.

<sup>31</sup> Amartya Sen, “Tagore and His India,” in *The Argumentative Indian: Writings on Indian History, Culture and Identity* (London: Penguin Books, 2005), p.89.

<sup>32</sup> English biographies of Tagore are numerous from 1913 to 1995, but it is claimed that only two of them are generally regarded as significant. The first is by Edward Thompson, *Rabindranath Tagore: Poet and Dramatist*, first published in 1926, which is not immune from Euro-centrism. The second is by Tagore’s grandson-in-law Krishna Kripalani

corpus of Tagore's verbal works, which comprises poems, plays, novels, lyrics, essays, lectures, and letters—all dealing with a wide range of topics—cannot fully represent his creativity, as he is also the composer of thousands of paintings and songs (including the national anthems of both India and Bangladesh), as well as a rural reformer and school founder. Interestingly, when it comes to the reception of *Gitanjali* in the West, the two authors claim: "Today, by contrast, his prose writings would more likely have secured him the prize than his translated poetry."<sup>33</sup> The *Guardian* article also expresses a similar view: "perhaps the time has come for us to forget Tagore was ever a poet [due to translation problems], and think of his more intelligible achievements. These are many."<sup>34</sup> These many achievements start with Tagore's being "a fine essayist" and end with his being "a critical nationalist," which are precisely Tagore's two most appealing qualities for contemporary reviewers. I would argue, however, that what is needed today is exactly the opposite of the suggestion, that is, a reexamination of why Tagore was NOT primarily identified as a poet throughout his international career. This is arguably a better way to "restore" Tagore. In this regard, the 1913 Presentation Speech by the Nobel Prize Committee is historically significant but has, strangely enough, long been ignored. The Committee awarded the prize to Tagore for the following reason:

...because of his profoundly sensitive, fresh and beautiful verse, by which, with consummate skill, he has made his poetic thought, expressed in his own English words, a part of the literature of the West.<sup>35</sup>

After praising the perfection with which Tagore combined faith and

---

(1907-1992), *Rabindranath Tagore: A Biography*, first published in 1962, which is weakened by its tendency to deify Tagore and eulogize Indian nationalism. For the comment, see Krishna Dutta and Andrew Robinson, *Rabindranath Tagore: The Myriad-Minded Man* (London and New York: Tauris Parke Paperbacks, 2009), p.15. The two treatments contrast not only in terms of perspective but also chronologically regarding the mutual definitions of Britain/Europe and India/Asia before and after WWII. For Thompson's book, see note 22. Kripalani's view of Tagore will be mentioned at the end of the chapter.

<sup>33</sup> Krishna Dutta and Andrew Robinson, *Rabindranath Tagore: The Myriad-Minded Man*, p.185.

<sup>34</sup> See note 26.

<sup>35</sup> Horst Frenz ed., *Nobel Lectures, Literature 1901-1967* (Amsterdam: Elsevier Publishing Company, 1969), p.127.

thought in his figurative language, the Committee went on to recognize that “the poet’s motivation extends to the effort of reconciling two spheres of civilization widely separated, which above all is the characteristic mark of our present epoch and constitutes its most important task and problem.”<sup>36</sup> Despite the keen awareness of this hemispheric discrepancy, however, the speech ignores the imperialist causes of the poor communication between the two spheres, firmly subsuming Tagore under Christian influence, whose proselytizing mission was thought to have inspired poetic expression in general, and to have revitalized vernacular language in particular outside the West.

Since it was the first time for the Nobel Prize to be granted to an Asian, the Committee showed much appreciation for the border-crossing initiative. Nevertheless, while expecting a mutually benefiting interaction between East and West, the Speech in many respects assumes the superiority of the latter and adopts a typical Orientalist view, which characterizes the East as a treasure house of “good tidings,” “whose existence had long been conjectured.”<sup>37</sup> Moreover, the question of with which tradition Tagore should be identified also incited debate. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan (1888-1975), an eminent philosopher who was later to become the Vice-President and then President of India, had already observed before 1918 that there were two views regarding Tagore’s philosophy. One held that Tagore’s theism was akin to, if not identical with, Christianity; the other held that Tagore was a great student of Buddha and a fine articulator of the Upanishads in the modern era.<sup>38</sup> It is not necessary to wade into this religious dispute. Suffice it to say that, from the very outset, the historic naming of an Asian as poet laureate was emblematic of the problems—rather than the solution—inherent in the mutual recognition between East and West in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Indeed, documents show that Tagore had been deeply concerned with the East-West debate from his youth. Nonetheless, it was the Nobel Prize and the cultural milieu then that made the issue more and more central to his writings and lectures. If Tagore was not yet aware of the reason for his Western acclaim in 1913, when he eventually gave a speech in Stockholm in 1921 (he was unable to attend the awards ceremony eight years earlier), he was confident enough to

---

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 128.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 131. This issue is discussed thoroughly in Chapter 2.

<sup>38</sup> Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, *The Philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore* (London: Macmillan, 1919), pp.2-6.

claim that he “represented the East” to receive the prize,<sup>39</sup> inevitably impressing his Western audiences as more of an Eastern messenger than a poet.

Amartya Sen notes that “he is not much read now in the West, and already by 1937, Graham Greene was able to say: ‘As for Rabindranath Tagore, I cannot believe that anyone but Mr. Yeats can still take his poems very seriously.’”<sup>40</sup> In fact, in a dedication to the volume celebrating Tagore’s 70<sup>th</sup> birthday in 1931, Yeats had indirectly shown indifference to Tagore’s later poems and praised his prose instead.<sup>41</sup> We can assume that Yeats was also impressed by Tagore’s critiques on nationalism, as a large proportion of his English essays is on civilizational issues. In the preface of *The Philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore*, Radhakrishnan also affirms that “the book would be lacking in wholeness without an account of Rabindranath’s views about Nationalism in the East and the West.”<sup>42</sup> In any case, the change from Tagore the poet to Tagore the messenger or essayist is discernible. Long after Tagore fell into oblivion altogether in the West, when new voices emerged to draw fresh attention to Tagore in terms of his contemporary relevance, it was his cultural and political discourse that first became the focus of distinguished scholars such as Isaiah Berlin and Edward Said.

Publications on Tagore in the West did not actually cease during the decades after his death, but it was not until the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century that a new research paradigm took shape, which tends to place Tagore in an anti-colonialist or postcolonial context. Here Tagore constitutes a brilliant case, for he was both a beneficiary of British rule, culturally and materially, and a fierce critic of imperialism in the modern world. Ashis Nandy, for instance, penetrates Tagore’s cultural vision from three sets of contradictions that “[d]uring the last hundred and fifty years...Afro-Asian reformers and thinkers have tried to reconcile,” namely, “that between the East and the West; that between tradition and modernity; and that between the past and the present.”<sup>43</sup>

---

<sup>39</sup> Rabindranath Tagore, “The Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech,” in Mohit K. Ray ed., *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore* (New Delhi: Atlantic, 2007), Volume V: *Essays*, p.5.

<sup>40</sup> Amartya Sen, “Tagore and His India,” in *The Argumentative Indian: Writings on Indian History, Culture and Identity*, p.89.

<sup>41</sup> W. B. Yeats, untitled, in Ramananda Chatterjee ed., *The Golden Book of Tagore: A Homage to Rabindranath Tagore from India and the World in Celebration of His Seventieth Birthday* (Calcutta: The Golden Book Committee, 1931; Rammohun Library & Free Reading Room, 1990), p. 269.

<sup>42</sup> Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, *The Philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore*, pp.viii-ix.

<sup>43</sup> Ashis Nandy, *The Illegitimacy of Nationalism: Rabindranath Tagore and the Politics of*

The arguments are elaborately constructed although the author claims that he is not a Bengali turned Tagore scholar.<sup>44</sup>

In an article entitled “Rabindranath Tagore and His Contemporary Relevance,” the authors delve into Tagore’s ideas of humanism, nationalism, and internationalism, which are considered deeply relevant to our age of globalization.<sup>45</sup> One of the authors, Uma Das Gupta, specializes in Tagore’s thought on education and nationalism. She elucidates the close connection between the two fields as follows:

[Tagore] hoped to institute an education for cultural understanding at two levels, between the country’s alienated urban and rural populations and between India and the West. He believed that would be the self-respecting way of countering the humiliation of colonial rule and overcoming the isolation enforced by colonization.<sup>46</sup>

Das Gupta also clarifies Tagore’s different attitudes towards nationalism. In most cases, “Nationalism” with a capital “N” refers to a West-originated ideology that reduces people’s will to mere efficient political and commercial functions, while “nationalism” with a lowercase “n” in a non-modern-Western context provides cohesion to a community of great diversity like India.<sup>47</sup>

Admittedly, Tagore’s thinking on culture, society, and politics is profound enough for continuous exploration, but there are two things noteworthy in relevant discussions. First, Tagore is hardly treated as a poet;<sup>48</sup> second, even in

---

*Self* (Delhi: Oxford UP, 1994), p.1.

<sup>44</sup> See note 24.

<sup>45</sup> Uma Das Gupta and Anandarup Ray, “Rabindranath Tagore and His Contemporary Relevance.” See: <http://www.parabaas.com/rabindranath/articles/pContemporaryTagore.html>.

<sup>46</sup> Uma Das Gupta ed., *The Oxford India Tagore: Selected Writings on Education and Nationalism* (New Delhi: Oxford UP, 2009), p. xxi. The same author dedicates a short biography to the relationship between Tagore’s educational ideals and his peculiar views on nationalism: “Disillusioned with nationalist politics, he turned to his own responses to the many troubled questions of the changing times. He was convinced that there could be no real political progress until social injustices were removed. He pointed repeatedly to the sectarian elements of Indian nationalism which kept our people divided. He hoped that the Santiniketan-Sriniketan education would create a new Indian personality to show the way out of the conflict of communities. He brought a different dimension to nationality by arguing for universal humanity.” Uma Das Gupta, *Rabindranath Tagore: A Biography* (New Delhi: Oxford UP, 2004), p.x. A late biography highlights similar points of Tagore’s life. Uma Das Gupta, *Rabindranath Tagore: An Illustrated Life* (New Delhi: Oxford UP, 2013).

<sup>47</sup> Uma Das Gupta ed., *The Oxford India Tagore: Selected Writings on Education and Nationalism*, p.xxiii.

<sup>48</sup> While the image of Tagore the poet is rather obscure in cultural and political issues,

this field issues are largely raised by Indians who are proficient in English,<sup>49</sup> and they are mainly addressing British readers for obvious historical reasons. Therefore, it can be said that while the simplistic understanding of Tagore's thought is elided in the new academic environment, the research paradigm remains shaped by an Orientalist premise that addresses the problems of identity and representation.

Nearly all mentions above of the West are equivalent to Britain. Tagore's last public lecture, "Crisis in Civilisation," is also an indictment against the Western, chiefly English, manipulation of world politics.<sup>50</sup> While this illegitimate equivalence of the West with Britain is historically understandable, it also reinforces the dominance of the English language over the international forum on Tagore. As a consequence, discussions on colonialism and nationalism will likely remain mainstream for some time to come.

An interesting attribute of Tagore studies is their periodic or even spasmodic nature. Since Tagore's death in 1941, renewed interest in Tagore is usually concomitant to commemorative events such as Tagore's centenary in 1961, his 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1986 and, most recently, his 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2011. Publications on Tagore cluster in the years around those events and the medium is primarily, although not exclusively, English. Amid this English literature, nevertheless, a considerable portion examines the reception of Tagore in different areas, thus providing a convenient way to observe Tagore's image in the non-British West. Responses are diverse indeed, given particular historical contexts in which different countries received the Indian luminary. For instance,

---

Tagore the novelist has received critical evaluation for unveiling conflicts in Indian nationalist movements and social problems. *Gora* (1910) and *The Home and the World* (1916) are his two most discussed novels.

<sup>49</sup> For example, Amartya Mukhopadhyay, *Politics, Society and Colonialism: An Alternative Understanding of Tagore's Responses* (New Delhi: Cambridge UP, 2010). On the back cover of the book a paragraph reads: "Even as his 150<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary draws near, Rabindranath Tagore remains quite underexplored. Nirad C. Chaudhuri predicted that the difficulty in translating Tagore's work would ensure that in future his work will lie 'like a buried city in the past.' The problem of translating his work in any of the European or modern Indian languages and his position as a cult figure in India have contributed to this gap between adulation and understanding. Recent revival of interest in the West in Tagore's work only partly redresses this imbalance. For, much of Tagore's central claim to greatness lies in his social thought." While largely dovetailing with this statement, this chapter serves to "redress" the "imbalance" from the opposite direction by reviewing how non-artistic issues have gained prevalence in mainstream Tagore studies. For a recent postcolonial reading of Tagore by a non-Indian author, see Michael Collins' *Empire, Nationalism and the Postcolonial World: Rabindranath Tagore's writings on history, politics and society* (London and New York: Routledge, 2011).

<sup>50</sup> Rabindranath Tagore, "Crisis in Civilisation," in Mohit K. Ray ed., *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore, Volume VII: Lectures, Addresses*, pp.980-986.

we are told that post-WWI Germany was seeking a message from the Eastern “savior;” Bulgarians were strongly sympathetic to Tagore’s search for national dignity; West-oriented Hungarian intellectuals were quite aware of the Orientalist implications of Tagore’s Nobel Prize; etc.<sup>51</sup> Significantly, from these periodic tributes it can be discerned that publication of Tagore’s works resurges towards the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in many countries, but that in not one of them has a new research paradigm crystallized as in the English-speaking world. For these countries, Tagore is a memory passed down from the 1910s and 1920s and inevitably identified with a mystic East. However, despite the relative shortage of systematic Tagore studies in non-British European countries, Tagore’s visits to the European continent and his interaction with local intellectuals contributed to his overarching notion of the West, which is worth further examination for both biographical and historical reasons.

#### 1.4 Orientalist Approach to Tagore: Japan and China

In a Tagore-centered context, the West is often identified with Britain, while India occupies a pivotal role in relevant depictions of the East. Nonetheless, for geographical and historical reasons, Tagore was passionate in calling for Japan and China to make a unified Asia. Unique perspectives on Tagore’s cultural vision have also formed in the two countries.

Tagore became known in Japan and China through his acclaim in the West, which means they, like Western countries, approached Tagore mainly through his mystic lyricism in English translation. Tagore’s name first appeared in Japan because of the Nobel Prize;<sup>52</sup> in China, the earliest introduction to Tagore was published even before announcement of the Prize.<sup>53</sup> Nevertheless, since Tagore became an Eastern messenger from the beginning of his international career, when he headed for Japan and China in 1916 and 1924

---

<sup>51</sup> Martin Kämpchen, “Tagore’s Receptions in Germany: The Story of a Rise from Rejection to World Literature Status,” in Kathleen M. O’Connell and Joseph T. O’Connell eds., *Rabindranath Tagore: Reclaiming a Cultural Icon*, pp.259-279; Alexander Shurbanov, “Tagore in Bulgaria,” in *Rabindranath Tagore in Perspective* (Calcutta: Visva-Bharati, 1989), pp.207-216; Imre Bangha, “Five Responses to Rabindranath Tagore in Hungary 1913-1914,” in Amalendu Biswas, Christine Marsh, Kalyan Kundu eds., *Rabindranath Tagore: A Timeless Mind* (London: The Tagore Centre UK, 2011), pp.1-15.

<sup>52</sup> “Indo shijin no eiyo” 印度詩人の栄誉 (Kudos to an Indian Poet), in *Yomiuri shinbun* 読売新聞 (Yomiuri News) on November 16, 1913.

<sup>53</sup> Qian Zhixiu 錢智修, “Taieer shi zhi renshengguan” 台莪爾氏之人生觀 (Tagore’s View of Life), in *The Eastern Miscellany*, Vol.10, No.4 (October, 1913), pp.1-4.

respectively, what he tacitly assumed was this identity, although he always claimed himself to be a poet.

Tagore's experiences in Japan helped sharpen his views on the East-West dichotomy, which for him was also the old-new division:

In that country the old world presents itself with some ideal of perfection...And side by side, in the same soil, stands the modern world, which is stupendously big and powerful, but inhospitable.<sup>54</sup>

The duality of Japanese society was a topic that Tagore dwelled on in his 1916 speeches delivered in Japan, and that later became one of the sections of *Nationalism*. Without much protest, Tagore referred to the negative image of Asia in modern Western eyes:

We have been repeatedly told, with some justification, that Asia lives in the past...It was said of Asia that it could never move in the path of progress, its face was so inevitably turned backwards.<sup>55</sup>

In the rather subdued atmosphere, “[o]ne morning the whole world looked up in surprise, when Japan broke through her walls of old habits in a night and came out triumphant.”<sup>56</sup> However, Tagore refused to believe that Japan was able to modernize by imitating the West, and he made a critical distinction between modern as self-renewing and modern as alienating. While the former draws inspiration from tradition, the latter becomes subordinated to inhuman utility. Through this dialectic, the old and the new acquired meaning in terms of cultural resources rather than of technological advancement, which challenged the normative definition of modernity shaped by the view of linear progress. Therefore, Tagore appealed to the responsibility of Japan as pioneer in the East: “She must infuse the sap of a fuller humanity into the heart of modern civilization.”<sup>57</sup> Of course, he did not forget that the West had its great tradition of humanity, but the profit-seeking nationalism largely crowded out the ideal, a

---

<sup>54</sup> Rabindranath Tagore, “East and West,” in *Creative Unity* (London: Macmillan, 1922), p.97.

<sup>55</sup> Rabindranath Tagore, “Nationalism in Japan,” in *Nationalism* (San Francisco: The Book Club of California, 1917), p.65.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p.68.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p.86.



tendency that Tagore also observed growing in Japan:

What is dangerous for Japan is, not the imitation of the outer features of the West, but the acceptance of the motive force of the Western nationalism as her own. Her social ideals are already showing signs of defeat at the hands of politics.<sup>58</sup>

Tagore's message was not well received in Japan, which in 1916 was enjoying a rise in international status and developing a militarist pan-Asianism that sought to annex China after having acquired Taiwan and Korea. Taking a longer view, there were two important interlocutors who marked the beginning and end of Tagore's direct dialogue with the Japanese. The intervening forty years witnessed a change in Japan's Asian sentiments and policies.

Tagore's friendship with Okakura Kakuzō 岡倉覚三 (1863-1913), the author of *The Ideals of the East* and who coined the slogan of "Asia is one,"<sup>59</sup> began when the latter stayed in India for the year from 1901 to 1902. Although no documentation of their correspondence or conversations is available, Tagore remembered his Japanese friend cordially in a 1929 speech in Tokyo:

The voice of the East came from him to our young men. That was a significant fact, a memorable one in my own life. And he asked them to make it their mission in life to give some great expression of the human spirit worthy of the East.<sup>60</sup>

Tagore invoked the memory of Okakura not for nostalgia's sake, but to engage in another round of preaching against imperialist Japan, which was deviating further and further from Okakura's ideal. Noguchi Yonejirō 野口米次郎 (1875-1947) was one of the "converts" from idealism to militarism. Being a member of the welcoming committee for Tagore's 1916 tour,<sup>61</sup> by 1938, Noguchi's pan-Asianism had grown so aggressive that he tried to convince

---

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p.96.

<sup>59</sup> Okakura Kakuzō, *The Ideals of the East*, in *Okakura Kakuzō: Collected English Writings* (Tokyo: Heibonsha Limited, Publishers, 1984), Vol.1, p.13.

<sup>60</sup> Rabindranath Tagore, "On Oriental Culture and Japan's Mission," in Mohit K. Ray ed., *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore, Volume VII: Lectures & Addresses*, p.822.

<sup>61</sup> This fact is made clear in Yamasaki Nobuko's "The Letters between Tagore and Noguchi, 1938," in Patrick Colm Hogan and Lalita Pandit eds., *Rabindranath Tagore: Universality and Tradition*, p. 41.

Tagore of the necessity of the war against China:

But if you take the present war in China for the criminal outcome of Japan's surrender to the West, you are wrong, because, not being a slaughtering madness, it is, I believe, the inevitable means, terrible it is though, for establishing a new great world in the Asiatic continent...<sup>62</sup>

Needless to say, their relationship soured, and thus ended Tagore's four-decade effort to appeal to Japan for Asian unity.

Slightly earlier than the correspondence with Noguchi, Tagore sent in 1937 a message of consolation to the Chinese people, whose country had been invaded by the Japanese. Tagore claimed that, by submitting itself to Western "scientific effrontery," Japan had lost its legitimacy to lead Asia into the modern era.<sup>63</sup> In fact, as early as 1920 when Tagore had a conversation with Feng Youlan 馮友蘭 (1895-1990) in New York, he had suggested that Chinese learn science quickly but be wary of the jingoism that was rising in Japan.<sup>64</sup> Therefore, it was almost natural for Tagore to turn to China for a true unity of Asia, a journey he was to embark on a few years later, in 1924.

On this tour, Tagore kept reminding his Chinese audiences of the difficulty his Indian ancestors endured in bringing the philosophy of love to their land. This bond was even stronger than the one with Japan, as the Japanese received Buddhism mainly through China and Korea, not from India directly. He also often praised China's humanistic tradition:

You are the most long-lived race, because you have had centuries of wisdom nourished by your faith in goodness, not in the merely strong. This has given you your great past.<sup>65</sup>

---

<sup>62</sup> "Tagore and Noguchi," in Mohit K. Ray ed., *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore, Volume VIII: Miscellaneous Writings*, p.1135.

<sup>63</sup> Rabindranath Tagore, "To the People of China," in Mohit K. Ray ed., *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore, Volume VIII: Miscellaneous Writings*, p.1132.

<sup>64</sup> Feng Youlan 馮友蘭, "Yu Indu Taiguer tanhua: dongxiwenming zhi bijiaoguan" 與印度泰谷爾談話—東西文明之比較觀 (Conversation with Tagore from India: A Comparative View of Eastern and Western Civilizations) in *Sansongtang quanji* 三松堂全集 (Complete Works of the Sansong Chamber) (Zhengzhou: Henan People's Publishing House, 2001), Vol.11, pp.6-7. The conversation between Tagore and Feng is scrutinized in Chapter 6.

<sup>65</sup> Rabindranath Tagore, "Talks in China," in Mohit K. Ray ed., *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore, Volume IV: Essays*, p.758.

But the cruel fact remained that both India and China seemed to be overburdened with the past, to which Tagore had nothing to offer but spiritual consolation:

Let the morning of this new age dawn in the East, from which the great streams of idealism have sprung in the past...Prove how, through the heroism of suffering and sacrifice—not weak submission—we can demonstrate our best wealth and strength.<sup>66</sup>

Such a stance involved Tagore in a heated cultural dispute in early-twentieth-century China. There were three approaches being debated for China's future: pro-Westernization, anti-Westernization, and various versions of eclecticism. While Tagore was largely ignorant of this situation, as an Asian celebrity he was easily idolized on the one hand and became a convenient target of criticism on the other. When some Chinese admirers celebrated Tagore's 64<sup>th</sup> birthday in Beijing on May, 8, 1924, Liang Qichao 梁啟超 (1873-1929) presented him with a Chinese name, Zhu Zhendan 竺震旦, which was a combination of the old appellations of India and China and most symbolic of the ancient East.<sup>67</sup> The joy of this celebration, however, was not shared by many people. Politically, both leftists and rightists found Tagore's "heroism of suffering and sacrifice" unacceptable. What they did not understand was that Tagore had once been an activist in the Indian independence movement. But this aspect found little place in his admirers' eulogies and in his own grand narrative of East-West civilizations.<sup>68</sup> Culturally, Tagore's tendency to dress everything in idealism caused much dissatisfaction. For example, Chen Duxiu 陳獨秀 (1879-1942) pointed out that there were two fundamental mistakes in Tagore's argument: "First, he misunderstands the value of science and material

---

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p.750.

<sup>67</sup> Liang Qichao, "Taiguer de Zhongguoming: Zhu Zhendan" 泰古爾的中國名—竺震旦 (Tagore's Chinese Name: Zhu Zhendan), in *Yinbingshi heji* 飲冰室合集 (Collected Works of the Yinbing Chamber), *Wenji* 文集 (Monographs) (Taipei: Chung Hwa Book Company Limited, 1970), No.41, pp.47-48.

<sup>68</sup> Lu Xun 魯迅 (1881-1936) came to realize only a decade later that Tagore was sufficiently politically-minded. See his "Masha yu pengsha" 罵殺與捧殺 (Blame to Death and Praise to Death), in *Lu Xun quanji* 魯迅全集 (Complete Works of Lu Xun) (Beijing: People's Publishing House, 2005), Vol.5, pp.615-617.

civilization; second, he leads Eastern countries the wrong way for liberation.”<sup>69</sup> In brief, what most concerned the Chinese people in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century was physical power and national independence.

Complementary to the experiences in the West, where Tagore faced a Eurocentric version of Orientalism, Japan and China provided him with necessary instances to base his own version of Orientalism on spiritual superiority. Tagore’s controversial visits to Japan and China have been examined at length by Stephen Hay in his 1970 monograph, which astutely indicates how Tagore inherited and revamped the East-West paradigm that was *de facto* of Western origin.<sup>70</sup> Critically, while Edward Said did not mention Tagore’s arguments in his *Orientalism*, the issue of the West’s biased representation of the East was raised in an international forum by Tagore more than half a century before Said’s groundbreaking work.

Actually, Tagore did not possess genuine knowledge of either Japan or China; he simply adapted his notions of them to an overarching framework:

Tagore and other Bengali religious leaders had answered this question [of East-West dichotomy] by stressing modernized traditions of Indian religious and philosophical thought, leaving the direction of political, economic, and military affairs to Westerners, many of whom readily acknowledged the superior spirituality of India’s sages and seers...Such a division of labor seemed to Tagore to work so well that he visualized the whole of Asia concentrating its energies on cultural and spiritual pursuits.<sup>71</sup>

Nevertheless, as an engaged observer, Tagore differentiated his messages

---

<sup>69</sup> Chen Duxiu, “Ping Taigeer zai Hangzhou Shanghai de yanshuo” 評太戈爾在杭州上海的演說 (On Tagore’s Lectures in Hangzhou and Shanghai), in Ren Jianshu 任建樹 et al. eds., *Chen Duxiu zhuzuo xuan* 陳獨秀著作選 (Selected Works of Chen Duxiu) (Shanghai: Shanghai People’s Publishing House, 1993), Vol.2, pp.663-667.

<sup>70</sup> Stephen Hay, “Introduction,” in *Asian Ideas of East and West: Tagore and His Critics in Japan, China, and India* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1970), pp.1-11. Some of the interpretations of this book are disputable, but its narrative structure and focus of analysis become normative for many ensuing studies. Apart from being a monograph of Tagore studies, Hay’s book is also known as one of the earliest works that deal with the historic pan-Asianist ideology. See “Introduction,” in Sven Saaler and Christopher W. A. Szpilman eds., *Pan-Asianism: A Documentary History Volume1: 1850-1920* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2011), p.3.

<sup>71</sup> Stephen Hay, *Asian Ideas of East and West: Tagore and His Critics in Japan, China, and India*, p.82.

to Japan and China, testifying to the structure of modern world history in which Japan and China lay on the opposite sides of “modernization.” More importantly, some thought-provoking issues that can be addressed from an Orientalist viewpoint derive from his interaction with the two Asian countries.

Firstly, in most biographies of Tagore written by Indians or Westerners, his Eastern journeys constitute nothing more than passing episodes. This treatment is almost inevitable since Tagore emerged as an Eastern prophet through Western acclaim and imagination. The Japanese and Chinese episodes became possible owing to the laurels from the West, against which Tagore kept revising his cultural perspective throughout his life. Neither Japan nor China critically influenced Tagore’s worldview or mainstream studies on him.

Secondly, that Tagore’s message was not taken seriously in his time in either Japan or China does not imply that those countries were not interested in a pan-Asian project. Just as Tagore fervently celebrated the Japanese victory over Russia in 1905, his being awarded of the Nobel Prize in 1913 also aroused a sense of pride in Japan and China. What alienated Tagore from Japanese and Chinese intellectuals was his idealist conception of Asia, which was against Japan’s offensive pan-Asianism on the one hand, and adverse to the doubly defensive version of China’s Asianism against both Japan and the West on the other.<sup>72</sup>

Thirdly, the change of world politics gradually made Tagore’s previously unheeded message relevant to post-war Japan and China. Japan’s ruinous defeat in WWII reminded some scholars of Tagore’s fierce criticism of nationalism, which was revisited as early as 1961 in the commemorative volume celebrating Tagore’s 100<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary.<sup>73</sup> Furthermore, as devastating defeat brought with it the conviction in the Japanese mind that peace must be maintained at any cost, Tagore in his role as a messenger of Eastern humanity has become a frequent subject. China, too, has its own convention of Tagore studies. While a great deal of discussion is on the controversial 1924 trip that

---

<sup>72</sup> Cf. Sun Yat-Sen’s 1924 lecture on “great Asianism” in Kobe, in *Sun Zhongshan quanji* 孫中山全集 (Complete Works of Sun Yat-Sen) (Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1986), Vol.11, pp.401-409; Li Dazhao 李大釗, “Da Yaxiya zhuyi yu xin Yaxiya zhuyi” 大亞細亞主義與新亞細亞主義 (Great Asianism and New Asianism), in *Li Dazhao quan ji* 李大釗全集 (Complete Works of Li Dazhao) (Beijing: People’s Publishing House, 2006), Vol.2, pp.269-271. See Chapters 3 and 8 for Sun’s remarks, and Chapter 8 for Li’s.

<sup>73</sup> Tagōru kinenkai タゴール記念会 ed., *Tagōru seitan hyakunensai kinen ronbunshū* タゴール生誕百年祭記念論文集 (Rabindranath Tagore: Commemorative Essays to [sic.] Rabindranath Centenary Festival) (Tokyo: Tagore Memorial Association, 1961).

was deeply related to modern Chinese intellectual history,<sup>74</sup> more and more scholars are reviewing the great impact Tagore had on the New Literature Movement of China in the 1910s and 1920s, as well as his contribution to revitalizing cultural interaction between China and India. With the rise of both countries on the world stage towards the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there have been some attempts to reexamine Tagore's proposition of an Eastern civilization in the context of globalization, which aims to counter the long-prevalent Western paradigm of modernity.<sup>75</sup> Undeniably, Tagore's multifaceted relevance to the contemporary world finds strong evidence in Japan and China, but concerns there are chiefly locally or regionally oriented, with the identity and implication of the East lingering in scholars' minds.

Last but not least, just as the West refers to a much wider domain than Britain, Tagore's Asian experiences were by no means exhausted by Japan and China. Nine years earlier than Stephen Hay's work, there was a 1961 volume discussing Tagore's Asian ideal from the viewpoint of his visit to Thailand.<sup>76</sup> Tagore's travelogues composed during the Southeast and West Asia trips also provide an alternative to reviewing his own East-West paradigm. Furthermore, although the poet never visited Taiwan or Korea, people in the two Japanese colonies found great inspiration from his anti-colonialist thought. For contemporary Tagore studies, his Eastern experiences have not yet been fully explored, and fewer critiques of him have been collected from Eastern than from Western sources. This asymmetry is, perhaps, more evidence of the so-called Euro-centrism that informs Orientalism.

---

<sup>74</sup> Ji Xianlin 季羨林 (1911-2009) had touched upon this topic in a 1961 article. See his "Taigeer yu Zhongguo: jinian Taigeer dansheng yibai zhounian" 泰戈爾與中國—紀念泰戈爾誕生一百周年 (Tagore and China: In Memory of the Centenary of Tagore), in *Ji Xianlin wenji* 季羨林文集 (Complete Works of Ji Xianlin) (Nanchang: Jiangxi Education Publishing House, 1996), Vol.5, pp.180-213. Stephen Hay's 1970 monograph contains a detailed account of Tagore's 1924 visit to China, but this issue continues to attract Chinese scholars. This trip interests Indian scholars as well. For an example, see Sisir Kumar Das, "The Controversial Guest: Tagore in China," in Tan Chung ed., *Across the Himalayan Gap: An Indian Quest for Understanding China* (New Delhi: Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, 1998), pp.311-333.

<sup>75</sup> Some articles collected in a 2011 volume, *Tagore and China*, take this approach. See note 27. Tagore also features in such books as Tang Chung 譚中 ed., *Zhong-In datong: lixiang yu shixian* 中印大同—理想與實現 (*CHINDIA: Idealism and Realization*) (sic.) (Yinchuan: Ningxia People's Publishing House, 2007).

<sup>76</sup> Shakti Das Gupta, *Tagore's Asian Outlook* (Calcutta: Nava Bharati, 1961).

### 1.5 Orientalism as an Omnipresent Factor

This chapter delves into Tagore's thinking, public image, and studies on him from the perspective of Orientalism, contextualizing him not as a cultural figure representing the East during his time, but as a case in modern intellectual history that witnessed different approaches to the East.

As specified in the first section, what Orientalism entails is an epistemological distinction between the East and the West, with the latter usually assuming an active role. Following this broad definition, the second section delineates the process of Tagore's becoming (represented as) an Eastern mystic, which laid the backdrop for most concomitant discussions on the Indian poet. While the third section contrasts the diametrically opposed attitudes towards Tagore in India and in the West today, the fourth section also presupposes a Western "other" against which early-twentieth-century Japan and China adjusted their respective views of the East or Asia. In this concluding section, I will expand on the complicated function of Orientalism on three interconnected levels, that is, the mythologizing of Tagore, the crystallization of problematics of Tagore studies, and the emergence of the East as an issue.

The first level. In 1913, the West observed Tagore as a figure who "in conformity with the express wording of Alfred Nobel's last will and testament, had during the current year, written the finest poems 'of an idealistic tendency'."<sup>77</sup> By 1961, nevertheless, one scholar had already indicated that "[s]tudies of Tagore's poetry have been less numerous and less valuable than studies of his mysticism, of his educational ideal and of his humanistic philosophy,"<sup>78</sup> which testifies to the change from Tagore the poet to Tagore the messenger delineated above.

According to Amartya Sen, central to Tagore's educational ideals and humanistic philosophy was his strong belief in freedom and reasoning. It was out of aversion to forced discipline that Tagore dropped school in his early teens; such an experience inspired him to create an environment for pupils to enjoy open-air lessons—a method he claimed inherited the spirit of the ancient forest civilization of India—and to cultivate their genuine affinity to both Nature and

---

<sup>77</sup> Horst Frenz ed., *Nobel Lectures, Literature 1901-1967*, p. 127.

<sup>78</sup> Pierre Fallion, "Tagore in the West," in *A Centenary Volume: Rabindranath Tagore 1861-1961* (New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1961), p.319. This commemorative volume is not to be confused with another one published in Japan in the same year (see note 73).

the human world.<sup>79</sup> Furthermore, contrary to common impressions, Tagore was an enthusiastic defender of reasoning. What distinguished him from optimistic scientists was his awareness of and even appreciation for the limits of human reason, which were all too often mistaken as uncritical mysticism.<sup>80</sup> Imaginably, in the most unfavorable situation, which was often the case, Tagore tended to infuriate both Indians and non-Indians at the same time. Viewed from one end, Isaiah Berlin was correct in pointing out “some have thought Tagore to have yielded too much to the West;” viewed from the other, Tagore could barely rid himself of the label of an ultra-conservative. In a 1924 lecture in Beijing, Tagore said that “[f]or your people I am obsolete, and therefore useless, and for mine, newfangled and therefore obnoxious. I do not know which is true.”<sup>81</sup>

Politically speaking, insistence on freedom and reasoning also characterized Tagore’s pursuit of an independent India: he maintained that national liberation must be earned through dignity, intellect, and cooperation, rather than through begging for mercy or through violence, a stance that earned him the title of “dissenter among dissenters.”<sup>82</sup> In contrast to this complexity was the lustrous guise of Eastern mysticism that was demanded by temporary Western sentiment. In this capacity Tagore once enjoyed unprecedented popularity. Although not as remarkable as his overnight rise, his reputation had clearly faded away on the global setting before his death in 1941.

The second level. As Edward Thompson indicated in the 1920s, Tagore’s romanticism—much diluted in translation—was bound to succumb to a modernist mode. Tagore the poet never resumed his past glory; nonetheless, the continual flow of Tagore studies since his death, albeit sometimes sparse, has witnessed recurrent interest in his humanism and idealism. A brief survey of the publications on Tagore in recent decades shows that many of these works elaborate on “the multiform ways in which Tagore’s life and work relate to the challenges of today.”<sup>83</sup>

---

<sup>79</sup> Tagore expressed this ideal frequently. A complete explanation can be found in his introduction to W. W. Pearson’s *Shantiniketan: The Bolpur School of Rabindranath Tagore* (London: Macmillan, 1916), pp.17-24.

<sup>80</sup> In addition to “Tagore and His India,” Amartya Sen also discusses this issue in detail in his introduction to the newly translated autobiography of Tagore, *Boyhood Days* (Delhi: Puffin, 2006), pp. xii-xvi.

<sup>81</sup> Rabindranath Tagore, “Talks in China,” in Mohit K. Ray ed., *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore, Volume IV: Essays*, p.773.

<sup>82</sup> Ashis Nandy, *The Illegitimacy of Nationalism: Rabindranath Tagore and the Politics of Self*, p.xi.

<sup>83</sup> Margaret Chatterjee, “Welcome Address,” in Bhudeb Chaudhuri and K. G. Subramanyan



There are some chief categories among these studies of Tagore's relevance. Firstly, Tagore is portrayed as a "myriad-minded man," profound but full of contradictions. Such an image of Tagore invites studies from different viewpoints, mainly by Indian authors, accompanied by a growing global interest in Tagore. Secondly, complementary to Tagore the writer and thinker, his career as an educator and village reformer also attracts discussion. What is in question is less the result of these activities than the philosophy embodied therein, which Tagore claimed was passed down from ancient India. Thirdly, Tagore constitutes a focus in postcolonial discourse. The above three categories form a continuum of inquiries, with Indians often stressing Tagore's versatility and practical actions and Westerners mainly observing him through a cultural veil or theoretical prism. While the Indians are the closest to Tagore's multiple legacies, the long history of colonial rule obliges them to address the issue in terms of dialogue or even debate with Western countries, especially Britain. Paradoxically, as Tagore owed his status as national icon to the West, when Indians try to reclaim his profound relevance from general oblivion, they must also repeatedly grapple with the East-West bottleneck. Lastly, approaching the East-West paradigm from another angle, many Japanese and Chinese today show a renewed interest in Tagore's appeal for preservation of cultural identity, which was made a century ago when East Asia as a whole had just embarked on the journey of modernization.

The third level. Actually, the rise of Asia in our global village is a result of information technology, strategic deployment, and market mechanisms. Genuine consideration of cultural diversity does not seem to occupy a position high on the agenda. It was to break through this sloganized Asia that one author attempts to review the Asian ideals shared by Tagore and Okakura Kakuzō in the first years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>84</sup> As Okakura died in 1913, before Tagore's Nobel Prize, their interaction was highly intellectual and spiritual, with only slight political interference. But a critical question is: how much did Tagore know about the Asia outside of India?

For instance, East Asia, the part of Asia dearest to Tagore, contains China and Japan as its two main agents; Korea, Vietnam, and Taiwan are also

---

eds., *Rabindranath Tagore and the Challenges of Today* (Shimla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1988), p.3.

<sup>84</sup> Rustom Bharucha, *Another Asia: Rabindranath Tagore & Okakura Tenshin* (New Delhi: Oxford UP, 2006), pp.xv-xvii.

indispensable to the making of its regional history. Gaining increasing prominence today, this region is assumed to have shared a common cultural inheritance, thereby forming an organic entity. While not denying the historical relationship, it is also evident that East Asia became a rather artificial slogan proposed by imperial Japan from the 1920s, with a view to tightening its control over neighboring areas to compete with Western powers. However, twists and turns of this history were largely unknown to Tagore, who was born in a colonized India and whose cultural vision entailed an elite Indian-style demarcation between spiritual and material affairs, leaving the right of the latter to the West. Given the different historical backgrounds of India, Japan, and China, it was only natural that Tagore's overarching appeal to an Eastern spirituality could hardly win general sympathy.

Despite his lack of specific knowledge of other Asian countries, Tagore was keenly aware of the problem of Asia as an idea. In the 1929 Tokyo speech he claimed that:

When we talk about European civilization, we use a term which is real in its meaning, it is an undoubted fact. But when they glibly talk of the Oriental mind and culture, they do not realize that we have not yet been able to develop a universal mind, a great background of Oriental cultures. Our cultures are too scattered.<sup>85</sup>

It is unclear why Tagore chose the title "On Oriental Cultures and Japan's mission." The word "oriental" appeared only sporadically in his English writings; the expressions Tagore preferred were "Asian" or "Eastern" as previously shown. In any case, it might be safe to conclude that "Asia," "the East," and "the Orient" were all synonymous to Tagore, and the choice between them was stylistic. But what is clear is the dichotomy between "we"—the Asians—and "they"—the Europeans. Although this distinction is traceable to Tagore's early life, his sudden rise to fame helped crystallize his view in more irreconcilable terms. He clearly told Feng Youlan in 1920 that the difference between Eastern and Western civilizations is "a difference of kind, rather than of degree."<sup>86</sup>

---

<sup>85</sup> Rabindranath Tagore, "On Oriental Culture and Japan's Mission," in Mohit K. Ray ed., *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore, Volume VII: Lectures & Addresses*, p.826.

<sup>86</sup> Feng Youlan, "Yu Indu Taiguer tanhua: dongxiwenming zhi bijiaoguan," in *Sansongtang quanji*, Vol.11, p.4.

As Krishna Kripalani in his famous biography of Tagore says: “To the Western world Tagore’s chief significance lies in the new dimension he gave to its understanding of the East...Now and again a western thinker or scholar drew attention to some old literary classic or religious teacher and tributes were generously offered to the ancient wisdom of the East. But the general attitude was one of superiority and the basic incentive of exploitation.”<sup>87</sup> The extent to which Tagore “enlightened” Westerners concerning the East should not be exaggerated, but this 1962 biography poignantly reveals the essential Orientalist bias embedded in East-West exchanges prior to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, if not after. All in all, Tagore in his international career contributed to making Asia a topic. In categorizing India, China, and Japan together as “eastern Asia,” and categorizing Persia and Arabia together as “western Asia,” what he had in mind for contrast was an integrated West, a West that qualified him to speak for the East.<sup>88</sup>

It is striking to find how limited in terms of subjects and content Tagore’s Japan and China speeches were—two countries he wanted the most to incorporate into a unity of Asia. Tagore’s versatility is only visible through his conversations with Western thinkers such as Albert Einstein (1879-1955) and Romain Rolland (1866-1944). While these dialogues rambled from topic to topic including the arts, education, sciences, philosophy, and logic, Tagore’s message to Japan and China frequently repeated the motif of East-West dichotomy. Perhaps one can say that, at least for Tagore, Asia was created in the process of discourse, which was a strategy of self-Orientalism to counter Western hegemony in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>89</sup>

---

<sup>87</sup> Krishna Kripalani, *Rabindranath Tagore: A Biography* (Kolkata: Visva-Bharati, 2008), p.xx.

<sup>88</sup> Feng Youlan, “Yu Indu Taiguer tanhua: dongxiwenming zhi bijiaoguan,” in *Sansongtang quanji*, Vol.11, p.4.

<sup>89</sup> With the resurgence of Tagore studies in recent years, comparisons of his Asian project to those of other Asian intellectuals have increased. See Adam K. Webb, “The Countermodern Moment: A World-Historical Perspective on the Thought of Rabindranath Tagore, Muhammad Iqbal, and Liang Shuming,” in *Journal of World History*, Vol.19, No.2 (June, 2008), pp.189-212; Pankaj Mishra, *From the Ruins of Empire: The Revolt against the West and the Remaking of Asia* (London: Allen Lane, 2012).

## 2. Politics of Spirituality: Tagore's Conception of Asia

### 2.1 Tagore the Spiritualist?

Based on the first chapter that lays the groundwork for the overall dissertation—namely, the intertwining of Tagore's international career with the cultural mechanism of Orientalism—this chapter focuses on a key concept that I will argue was crucial to this history, namely, spirituality. Roughly speaking, Tagore defined an overarching Asia under an umbrella of spirituality, but he went on to differentiate this spirituality to address the diversity of Asian cultures. This effort did very little to counter West-centric Orientalism. To be specific, it remained under the aegis of that mechanism, from which derived self-Orientalism. By referring to Tagore's cultural vision and interpretations of him throughout his international career, this chapter aims to contextualize the Tagore phenomenon in a modern intellectual history that witnessed an enthusiastic but problematic mutual East-West identification process in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

As the first Nobel laureate from Asia, Tagore once enjoyed an unprecedented global reputation. While Tagore still figures prominently in Indian cultural life decades after his death, memory of him seems to have vanished in many parts of the world except in a few literary and academic communities. Amartya Sen consciously attributes this curious phenomenon to deeper cultural and cognitive causes:

The contrast between Tagore's commanding presence in Bengali literature and culture, and his near-total eclipse in the rest of the world, is perhaps less interesting than the distinction between the view of Tagore as a deeply relevant and many-sided contemporary thinker in Bangladesh and India, and his image in the West as a repetitive and remote spiritualist.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Amartya Sen, "Tagore and His India," in *The Argumentative Indian: Writings on Indian History, Culture and Identity*, pp.89-90.

As a writer, painter, philosopher, political activist, social critic, and educational reformer, Tagore's versatility needs no further confirmation. Yet recognition is another matter. Why and how did Tagore come to be viewed as a spiritualist who was "repetitive and remote"? This representation in the West will be examined in Section 2. Not surprisingly, awarding of the Nobel Prize to Tagore constitutes a crucial part of the phenomenon.

Then, what does "spirituality" or "spiritualist" mean in the context of idea exchange between Tagore and his global readers and audience? Sen goes on to relate this designation to religious mysticism:

Tagore certainly had strongly held religious beliefs (of an unusually nondenominational kind), but he was interested in a great many other things as well and had many different things to say about them...His admirers in the West, however, were tuned to the more otherworldly themes which had been emphasized by his first Western patrons.<sup>2</sup>

Nevertheless, it must be noted that if otherworldly themes were appealing to Western ears, the case was more complicated in the East, which was equated to the eastern part of Asia by Tagore—especially India and China as two prominent living ancient civilizations, and Japan as a rising power on the world stage in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. On the one hand, dominance of Western over Eastern countries compelled the latter to align themselves with more practical issues. Yet different traditions and diverse criteria were also to be found in Eastern countries, even if in the "spiritual" sphere. While it is widely known that Tagore (and many others) often contrasted a spiritual East with a materialistic West, a view gaining momentum after WWI, much less attention has been paid to the fact that Tagore did try to define "spirituality" in a very broad sense or redefine it altogether. This will be articulated in Section 3.

Arguably, creating clear-cut divisions between East and West, or spirituality and materialism, is itself ideology-ridden, but the concept of the East or Asia would not have been possible without this effort. In this sense, Tagore's view, idiosyncratic as it might be, also unwittingly echoed the mainstream civilizational discourse that was of a Western origin but became popular in the East later. This is only natural as Tagore was raised in

---

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.97-98.

Westernized Bengal, and it was by dint of a Western laurel that he became identified as an Eastern prophet. Delving into this structure of knowledge production, Section 4 focuses on the grand narrative of East-West civilizations prevalent in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. However spiritual Asia was characterized in those narratives, including Tagore's, the problem of modernization constitutes an inevitable focus. There were different understandings of modernization and different programs to carry it out, but as will be argued, Asia was essentially imagined through both spatial and temporal dichotomies against a modern Western yardstick.

## 2.2 Eastern Mysticism in the Modern Western Psyche

Aware of Tagore's image as "the great mystic from the East," Amartya Sen claims that "[t]o a great extent this Tagore was the West's own creation, part of its tradition of message-seeking from the East, particularly from India."<sup>3</sup> While a psychological exploration of this tradition is beyond the scope of this chapter, its manifestation in the early twentieth-century West can be found in the mythologizing of Tagore. A historical approach toward this issue, which delves into considerable discursive nuances, is attempted here.

The well-known story goes as follows: in 1912 when Tagore was to embark on a journey to England, he started translating some of his metric poems from Bengali into English prose verse. The poems, in manuscript form, astounded literary circles in London, and William Butler Yeats soon edited them for publication and wrote a laudatory introduction. This volume, *Gitanjali*, won Tagore an immediate reputation and the Nobel Prize the following year.<sup>4</sup> As the first significant Western essay on Tagore, Yeats' introduction to *Gitanjali* is worth close reading. It is poetic, sentimental, and contrasts Tagore and Indian civilization with the West on many points.<sup>5</sup>

Yeats said, "If our life was not a continual warfare, we would not have taste... Four-fifths of our energy is spent in the quarrel with bad taste, whether in our own minds or in the minds of others."<sup>6</sup> Taste is a keyword here. Tagore's

---

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.93-94.

<sup>4</sup> See Chapter 1 for a detailed account.

<sup>5</sup> Yeats understood quite well that his introduction was impressionistic and hoped that a full index on Tagore could be appended to his piece, a remark quoted in Krishna Dutta and Andrew Robinson, *Rabindranath Tagore: The Myriad-Minded Man*, p.166.

<sup>6</sup> W. B. Yeats, "Introduction," in Rabindranath Tagore, *Gitanjali: Song Offerings*, p.xii.

poetry was meant to be sung for generations rather than reduced to something to be consumed by ladies of leisure or busy students. Besides representing good taste, for Yeats, what Tagore embodied was a higher synthesis, a synthesis beyond a simplistic division between worldly appreciation of different tastes and the ascetic refusal of them that seems to have dominated the Western imagination in general:

Since the Renaissance the writing of European saints...has ceased to hold our attention. We know that we must at last forsake the world...; but how can we, who have read so much poetry, seen so many paintings, listened to so much music, where the cry of the flesh and the cry of the soul seem one, forsake it harshly and rudely?<sup>7</sup>

“Warfare,” “quarrel,” “forsake,” and so forth—Yeats’ characterizations seem to suggest that the West was focused on fighting in definite terms of gaining or losing. Good taste defended itself against bad; the other-worldly rose above the worldly. For Tagore, however, life and death, soul and flesh are not mutually exclusive, as a line quoted by Yeats indicates: “And because I have loved this life I know I shall love death as-well.”<sup>8</sup> Moreover, God is not a vision to be gained from abjuration of the world, but an omnipresence that becomes clear especially when life is looked back upon. Yeats’ eulogy comes to its end with a discarding of divisions between life, nature, literature, and religion:

An innocence, a simplicity that one does not find elsewhere in literature makes the birds and the leaves seem as near to him as they are near to children...Indeed, when he is speaking of children, so much a part of himself this quality seems, one is not certain that he is not also speaking of the saints...<sup>9</sup>

However naïve Yeats’ portrayal may seem, it is noteworthy that the terms “mystic” or “spiritual” seldom feature in the introduction. Rather, spontaneity, innocence, and simplicity constitute “a world I have dreamed of all my life

---

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p.xvii.

<sup>8</sup> From verse 95 of *Gitanjali*. *Ibid.*, p.xviii.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.xxi-xxii.

long.”<sup>10</sup> It has long been criticized that Yeats over-interpreted many subtle images in *Gitanjali* to be God incarnate, thus giving Tagore’s poetry too definite a character. Nonetheless, Yeats’ own attitude was more pious than religious, and the same can be said of Ezra Pound’s (1885-1972) early enthusiasm for Tagore.

In late 1912, Pound wrote a eulogistic review of some poems to be contained in *Gitanjali*: “The Greek shows us man as the sport of the gods; the sworn foe of fate and the natural forces. The Bengali brings to us...a quiet proclamation of the fellowship between man and the gods; between man and nature.”<sup>11</sup> Like Yeats, Pound saw a West strained between antithetical forces, whereas the world is represented as harmonious in Tagore’s poetry. Such an appreciation of simplicity and immediacy, both metaphysically and aesthetically, was also found in André Gide’s (1869-1951) introduction to his French translation of *Gitanjali*: “What I admire about *Gitanjali* is that it needs no [extra-textual] preparation in order to read it. No doubt it is interesting to notice the connections between this book and ancient India, but it is more interesting to consider how it speaks to us.”<sup>12</sup>

After spending several months in England, Tagore went to the United States at the end of 1912. He was invited to give lectures on Indian philosophy at Harvard University in February 1913. The lectures were soon published as *Sadhana: The Realisation of Life*. Expanding on the spirit of the Upanishads and the Buddha’s teachings, each chapter of this volume addresses a specific aspect of the essential human union with the universe. On the first page of the book, Tagore is introduced as the “Author of ‘Gitanjali’.” This collection of poems had formed around Tagore a mystic aura, which became a definite symbol with publication of the sermons.<sup>13</sup> Critically, views on Tagore diverged soon after his religious speeches, and Pound again was among the first persons to herald this change. In March 1913, he still praised *Gitanjali*: “[i]f these poems have a flaw...it is that they are too pious. Yet I have nothing but pity for the reader who

---

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p.xiii.

<sup>11</sup> Ezra Pound, “Tagore’s Poems,” in *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse* (December, 1912), p. 93.

<sup>12</sup> André Gide, “Introduction,” in André Gide tr., *L’Offrande Lyrique (Gitanjali)* (Paris: Nouvelle Revue française, 1917), pp.ix-x. The introduction was written in late 1913 or early 1914.

<sup>13</sup> It must be mentioned that Tagore never identified himself with philosophy in the strict sense throughout his life, and he started the preface to *Sadhana* with the following statement: “Perhaps it is well for me to explain that the subject-matter of the papers published in this book has not been philosophically treated, nor has it been approached from the scholar’s point of view.” See Rabindranath Tagore, *Sadhana: Realisation of Life*, p.vii.



is unable to see that their piety is the poetic piety of Dante, and that is very beautiful.”<sup>14</sup> In a letter dated April 22 the same year, nevertheless, Pound’s view on Tagore turned satirical:

So long as he sticks to poetry he can be defended on stylistic grounds against those who disagree with his content. And there’s no use his repeating the Vedas and other stuff that has been translated.<sup>15</sup>

It is reasonable to assume that Pound’s antipathy to Tagore began with the *Sadhana* lectures, as Tagore’s English works prior to this volume are all collections of poems revised by Yeats. From the term, “poetic piety,” we know that Pound’s appreciation of the religiosity of Tagore’s poetry was aesthetic rather than theological. Besides, Gide exclaimed in his introduction to the French version of *Gitanjali*: “After the 214,778 verses of *Mahabharata*, the 48,000 verses of *Ramayana*, what a relief! Ah!...thanks to Rabindranath Tagore...we don’t have to exchange length for quality...For virtually each of the 103 poems in *Gitanjali* carries admirable weight.”<sup>16</sup> From this statement, it is possible to assume that Gide would probably be disappointed with a Tagore who sermonizes in *Sadhana*, although no comments on this book from Gide are available.

A strictly aesthetic evaluation of Tagore was not widely shared after all. As a formal body, the Nobel Prize Committee’s portrayal of Tagore proved closer to the image that was to become widespread. This portrayal was far more political as well. Praising the poetic sublimity of Tagore, the Presentation Speech by the Committee claims that *Gitanjali* “has belonged to English literature.” Notwithstanding its being a great compliment to a foreign author, it smacks of West-centricity, if not imperialism: “Tagore has been hailed from various quarters as a new and admirable master of that poetic art which has been a never-failing concomitant of the expansion of British civilization ever since the days of Queen Elizabeth.”<sup>17</sup> The Committee went on to elevate the issue to civilizational and religious levels, attributing the revival of Eastern cultures

---

<sup>14</sup> *Fortnightly Review* (March, 1913). Cited from Krishna Kripalani, *Tagore: A Life* (New Delhi: National Book Trust, 1986), p.126.

<sup>15</sup> Ezra Pound, “To Harriet Monroe,” in D. D. Paige ed., *The Letters of Ezra Pound, 1907-1941* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1950), p.19.

<sup>16</sup> André Gide, “Introduction,” in André Gide tr., *L’Offrande Lyrique (Gitanjali)*, p.xi.

<sup>17</sup> Horst Frenz ed., *Nobel Lectures, Literature 1901-1967*, p.127.

and literatures to the Christian proselytizing movement:

The Christian mission has exercised its influence as a rejuvenating force in India, too, where in conjunction with religious revivals many of the vernaculars were early put to literary use, thereby acquiring status and stability.<sup>18</sup>

While Tagore's creative transformation of Indian traditions was not ignored, it was persistently subsumed under modern, hence Western, influence:

Even though Tagore may have borrowed one or another note from the orchestral symphonies of his native predecessors, yet he treads upon firmer ground in this age that...spends its own energies in dispatching greetings and good wishes far over land and sea.<sup>19</sup>

What is more, the Committee also tended to adopt more definite religious terms in characterizing Tagore's "aesthetic theism":

This is mysticism...but not a mysticism that, relinquishing personality, seeks to become absorbed in an All that approaches a Nothingness, but one that, with all the talents and faculties of the soul trained to their highest pitch, eagerly sets forth to meet the living Father of the whole creation.<sup>20</sup>

The various expressions convey the same theme: Tagore, if not West-minded, was influenced by the West, and especially by Christianity. In Yeats' introduction to *Gitanjali*, a mystic air prevails but taste is held in high regard. Pound seemed to be more radical on the aesthetic issue. Fully acknowledging the spiritual sublimity of Tagore's poetry,<sup>21</sup> when Tagore sermonized, Pound became outright critical. In a 1917 comment Pound satirizes Tagore's receiving the Nobel Prize: "Tagore got the Nobel Prize because, after

---

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p.129.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p.132.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> "There is the same sort of common sense in the first part of the New Testament, the same happiness in some of the psalms, but these are so apt to be spoiled for us by association." *Fortnightly Review* (March, 1913). Cited from Krishna Kripalani, *Tagore: A Life*, p.126.

the cleverest boom of our day, after the fiat of the omnipotent literati of distinction, he lapsed into religion and optimism and was boomed by the pious non-conformists.”<sup>22</sup> Obviously, right through 1917, Tagore’s image in most Western minds was invariably religious as promoted by the Committee. In a 1918 monograph, Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, an eminent philosopher who was later to become the second president of India, even was compelled to defend Tagore from many plausible claims that his religious thought was simply mimicry of Christianity.<sup>23</sup>

In brief, while Yeats, Pound, and Gide evaluated Tagore from the poets’ point of view, cognition of mysticism seems to have dominated public opinion on Tagore. Edward Thompson painfully acknowledged that “of whom every possible opinion is entertained in Europe and America, from his apotheosis as the last and most wonderful teacher of the ages to his contemptuous dismissal as a charlatan.”<sup>24</sup> Not surprisingly, the spectrum presented by Thompson is a religious one.

Of course, it would be an overstatement to say that the West’s interest in Tagore was exclusively religious and that Tagore was just a passive object of representation. As the Nobel Prize Committee noted, “the poet’s motivation extends to the effort of reconciling two spheres of civilization widely separated,”<sup>25</sup> and it was in this domain that Tagore sought to define his own image and the identity of Asia as the provider of spiritual resources to both Eastern and Western civilizations. What complicated this history is the following fact: it was Western accolades that enabled Tagore to travel to many parts of the world and helped refine his grand historical and cultural narrative. In claiming a distinct identity and even overarching paradigm, Tagore frequently chose conceptual tools—such as “Asia,” “modernity,” and “civilization”—that all originated in a West-centric environment. Tagore consciously attempted to counter their original definitions in some cases, but largely remained subject to their ideological premises.

---

<sup>22</sup> Ezra Pound, “To Iris Barry,” in D. D. Paige ed., *The Letters of Ezra Pound, 1907-1941*, p.106.

<sup>23</sup> Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, *The Philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore*, pp.11-16. See Chapter 1 for a brief discussion.

<sup>24</sup> Edward Thompson, *Rabindranath Tagore: His Life and Work* (London: Oxford UP, 1921), pp.xi-x.

<sup>25</sup> Horst Frenz ed., *Nobel Lectures, Literature 1901-1967*, p.128.

### 2.3 Spirituality Claimed and Redefined: the East as Conceived by Tagore

As mentioned above, Pound's interest in Tagore cooled rapidly. Despite his change in attitude, he was also an early protestor against the popular misunderstanding of Tagore in the West:

Why the good people of this land are...incapable...of devising for his honour any better device than that of wrapping his life in cotton wool and parading about with the effigy of a sanctimonious moralist, remains and will remain for me an unsolvable mystery.<sup>26</sup>

The complaint appeared in a review of *The Gardener*, Tagore's second volume of English poems that is different in style and content from *Gitanjali*, which shows that Pound was not unaware of the diversified literary tastes of Tagore. However, as a biographer pointed out, "the first impressions are always more vivid and lasting and Tagore would henceforth [i.e. since the publication of *Gitanjali*] be regarded in the West as primarily a religious and philosophic poet."<sup>27</sup> The mythologizing of Tagore has elicited much discussion and it is agreed that the poet wittingly applied himself to the niche carved out for him by the West. Overemphasis on this view, however, would eclipse the other half of the truth that Tagore strove to define the East within the broader frame of spirituality rather than mere religiosity, a process that demands elucidation to restore complexity to a simplified Tagore.

From the very beginning of his international career, Tagore was strongly sympathetic to the border-crossing initiative of the Nobel Prize Committee: "I beg to convey to the Swedish Academy my grateful appreciation of the breadth of understanding which has brought the distant near, and has made a stranger a brother."<sup>28</sup> If this message is too short for a clear indication of Tagore's universalism, the 1921 Stockholm speech—Tagore's belated formal response to the Swedish Academy—demonstrates a fuller spectrum of his concerns.<sup>29</sup>

---

<sup>26</sup> Cited from Krishna Kripalani, *Tagore: A Life*, p.130.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> Horst Frenz ed., *Nobel Lectures, Literature 1901-1967*, p. 133.

<sup>29</sup> "This speech, in brief, gives us an idea, though in an embryonic form, of the quality and

Tagore understood that his *Gitanjali* poems “had brought with them a deeper feeling of rest, serenity and feeling of the eternal, and that these were exactly the sentiments that were needed by the Western people with their overactive life.” He attributed this spiritual power to Eastern civilization and specified that he “represented the East” to receive the Prize, the award of which he spent to establish a university to bring Eastern and Western minds together. The university (known as Visva-Bharati), in Tagore’s vision, would revive the ideal of education of an ancient India that was never parsimonious in giving spiritual wealth to the whole world. This generosity, unfortunately, had shrunk in the face of Western material power, and Indians were forced into collective ignorance of their cultural inheritance by the British educational establishment. Nevertheless, since the time for the great meeting of civilizations had come, Tagore appealed to his Western audience to join in his effort of bringing the two hemispheres into mutually beneficial contact.<sup>30</sup>

Like the Presentation Speech given eight years earlier by the Committee, Tagore’s response proceeds from poetic to spiritual to civilizational issues. But their differences are remarkable. While the Committee was eager and even anxious to place Tagore in an Oriental niche under the aegis of Western theology and politics, the poet challenged this structure by rhetorically asking “is not the East the mother of *spiritual Humanity* and does not the West..., when they get famished and hungry, turn their face to that serene mother, the East?”<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, the eulogy of “spiritual Humanity”—mainly identified with Indian tradition here—entails criticism of Western imperialism, albeit euphemistically. Tagore proclaimed that the “ideal of unity never rejects anything, any race, or any culture. It comprehends all...with sympathy and love. This is the spirit of India.” But the reality hurt him that in India a cry for rejection of the West was loud at the time. “I feel that it is a lesson which they have received from the West. Such is not our mission.”<sup>32</sup> By attributing the disturbance in the Indian pursuit of spiritual unity to a discriminating West, it can be observed that Tagore’s East-West dialectics is politically-minded.

Indeed, Tagore took pains to inject political protests into a

---

substance of Tagore’s vision of man and India. All his writings can be seen as elaborate manifestations of this vision in diverse forms.” See Mohit K. Ray, “Preface,” in Mohit K. Ray ed., *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore, Volume V: Essays*, p.xviii.

<sup>30</sup> Rabindranath Tagore, “The Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech,” in *ibid.*, pp.5-9.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p.5. My italics.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p.8.

spiritually-oriented civilizational discourse. In a friendly but inquisitive letter to Tagore, the classical scholar Gilbert Murray (1866-1957), an admirer of Tagore, shows discomfort with the notion of an East-West division: “People talk loosely of the difference in character between...‘East’ and ‘West,’ violently denouncing the one and praising the other. Even when there is no actual prejudice at work, the comparisons, though sometimes suggestive, are never exact.”<sup>33</sup> In his response, Tagore, while agreeing with Murray’s lofty ideal of human cooperation, addresses this division out of very practical considerations:

Unfortunately for us, however, the one outstanding visible relationship of Europe with Asia today is that of exploitation; in other words, its origins are commercial and material...There is no people in the whole of Asia today which does not look upon Europe with fear and suspicion.<sup>34</sup>

Of course, such a grand narrative—cultural as well as political—like Tagore’s can be naïve and logically inconsistent at times. From his reception of the Nobel Prize in 1913, Tagore seemed to feel a growing sense of responsibility to bridge East and West, and he became more and more obsessed with the dichotomy. For one who hailed “unity” as the guiding principle of the universe, Tagore seems to have depended on too strict a division between Eastern and Western civilizations to preach the ultimate “oneness.” For instance, in explaining his communion with Nature since youth, Tagore asserted “I am almost certain that...seclusion itself has no place in the Western world.”<sup>35</sup> It does not require much historical knowledge to repudiate this claim; the argument would not hold even if “the Western world” were qualified as the modern one.

Despite the over-generalization of the East-West paradigm, Tagore’s timely message was well received in the West through the 1930s. He was hailed as a messenger from the East even more than as a poet. Here arises a historical paradox: although the West, in the zeitgeist of post-WWI, enthusiastically

---

<sup>33</sup> Gilbert Murray and Rabindranath Tagore, *East and West* (Paris: International Institute of Intellectual Co-operation, League of Nations, 1935), pp.12-13. Murray’s letter to Tagore is dated 17 August 1934.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.43-44. Tagore’s response to Murray is dated 16 September 1934.

<sup>35</sup> Rabindranath Tagore, “The Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech,” in Mohit K. Ray ed., *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore, Volume V: Essays*, p.2.

accepted Tagore's criticism, his preaching of spiritual tradition was refuted and derided in Japan and China, Eastern countries *per se*, at a historical juncture when Japan was seeking to compete with Western powers and many Chinese people were blaming their national impotence on blind traditionalism.<sup>36</sup> As demonstrated in Chapter 1, Tagore poorly represented himself in the two countries by dwelling on the spiritual superiority of the East, a habit developed from his Western experiences. Tagore's many talents and concerns were not only unnoticed by his audiences, but were also insufficiently expressed by the speaker. Nevertheless, in hindsight, Tagore's endeavor to address both cultural and political issues while subsuming them under a comprehensive "spirituality" constitutes an intellectual feat in the redefinition of the East or Asia in the modern world.

Tagore's messages to Japan and China are conscious historical criticisms. As the cradle of all the major religions of the world, Asia was once great. "Then fell the darkness of night upon all the lands of the East. The current of time seemed to stop at once, and Asia ceased to take any new food, feeding upon its own past."<sup>37</sup> Amid this dullness that rendered Asia vulnerable to Western domination, Japan's sudden awakening surprised the whole world, but Tagore insisted that Japan thrived on its own merits that are definitely non-Western:

Europe seems to have felt emphatically the conflict of things in the universe, which can only be brought under control by conquest...But Japan has felt, in her world, the touch of some presence...Her relationship with the world is the deeper relationship of heart.<sup>38</sup>

Despite Japan's instinctive sense of beauty as observed, or imagined, by Tagore, the growing affinity of this young nation for the West compelled the poet to admonish: "You must apply your Eastern mind, your spiritual strength, your love of simplicity, your recognition of social obligation, in order to cut out a new path for this great unwieldy car of progress..."<sup>39</sup> Critically, a deeper exploration

---

<sup>36</sup> Stephen Hay dedicates a monograph mainly to this issue. See *Asian Ideas of East and West: Tagore and His Critics in Japan, China, and India*. Parts II and III of this dissertation deal with Tagore's relationship with modern Chinese and Japanese intellectual histories in detail from a wider perspective.

<sup>37</sup> Rabindranath Tagore, "Nationalism in Japan," in *Nationalism*, p.66.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p.90.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.73-74.

of Tagore's discourse shows that the "Eastern mind," "spiritual strength," "love of simplicity," and "recognition of social obligation" are all choice terms that he pit against what he viewed as the relentless machine of Western nationalism and materialism.

In contrast to Japan's modern achievements, Tagore admired China for its long history:

Your civilization has been nurtured in its social life upon faith in the soul. You are the most long-lived race, because you have had centuries of wisdom nourished by your faith in goodness, not in the merely strong.<sup>40</sup>

On another occasion, Tagore characterized the Chinese people in a way not very different from his praise of the Japanese: "you can take your joy in a naked presentation of reality...not because it has any association with something outside itself, but simply because it is before you, attracting your attention."<sup>41</sup> Nonetheless, in general, Tagore's message to China was more lenient and less urgent, because of the strong cultural bond between India and China and of their shared disadvantages in the modern era, which compelled him to claim that:

It is from the heart of the East that the utterance has sprung forth: "The meek shall inherit the earth." For the meek never wastes energy in the display of insolence, but are firmly established in true prosperity through harmony with the All.<sup>42</sup>

Apparently, even with practical issues, Tagore tended to apply such labels as "Eastern" and "spiritual," with a view to an ultimate "harmony with the All." Although this grandiose narrative was welcome in the early twentieth-century West, it did not really cater to an East that was then seeking to strengthen itself in material terms. However, it would not be fair to accuse Tagore of being so overawed by his own reputation in the West that he was blinded to the political

---

<sup>40</sup> Rabindranath Tagore, "Talks in China," in Mohit K. Ray ed., *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore, Volume IV: Essays*, p.758.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p.781.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p.752.



realities facing the East. The reason is a subtle one. While overarching terms like “Universal Nature,” “Eternal Spirit,” “man-in-the-universe” feature prominently in lectures such as *Sadhana* that appealed to the Western psyche,<sup>43</sup> Tagore rarely adopted the same language in Japan and China, where he did try to strike a more this-worldly or socially-oriented chord. This, arguably, evidences a strong historical and political consciousness in Tagore, in spite of a serious want of specifics. Indeed, in preaching universal harmony Tagore adhered to the East-West dichotomy to the point of being ideological. Nevertheless, he was aware of the nuances of the East and claimed a common Eastern culture by resorting to a “spirituality” that encompasses elements not exclusively Indian or otherworldly. Even before winning the Nobel Prize, in one of the lectures given in Chicago (prior to those at Harvard) Tagore showed keen awareness of a differentiated but unified East:

The greatness and beauty of Oriental art, especially in Japan and China, consist in this, that there the artists have seen this soul of things and they believe in it...Because we have faith in this universal soul, we in the East know that Truth, Power, Beauty, lie in Simplicity...In India, the greater part of our literature is religious, because God with us is not a distant God...We feel His nearness to us in all the human relationship of love and affection...[i]n seasons of flowers and fruits, in the coming of the rain, in the fullness of the autumn...<sup>44</sup>

However ethereal Tagore’s tone sounds, he did not simply position himself within the convenient category of Oriental mysticism that the West had prepared for him, as many scholars have assumed. Nonetheless, the Western mechanism of representation was complex and far-reaching. It is true that Tagore tried earnestly to define Asia according to self-understanding, but such an effort was impossible, or unnecessary, without the West as a reference, which provided both the conceptual structure and lexicon for elaborating on the idea of a modern Asia.

---

<sup>43</sup> Rabindranath Tagore, *Sadhana*, pp.5, 9, 10.

<sup>44</sup> Rabindranath Tagore, “What is Art,” in *Personality* (New York: Macmillan, 1917), pp.36-40.

## 2.4 Asia in Modern World History: A Comparative Review

As previously discussed, diverse reactions arose after the initial appreciation of Tagore in the West. Some remained fascinated for a while, like Yeats; some quickly grew tired and turned satirical, like Pound. Of the various views, the Presentation Speech by the Nobel Prize Committee deserves a deeper historical analysis, for it not only represented, or even authorized, mainstream opinion towards Tagore, but also sought to place the East in the hierarchy of civilizations as perceived by the early twentieth-century West.

As “a bearer of good tidings,” Tagore received extraordinary praise from the Committee:

[H]e places before us the culture that in the vast, peaceful, and enshrining forests of India attains its perfection, a culture that seeks primarily the quiet peace of the soul in ever-increasing harmony with the life of nature herself.<sup>45</sup>

This harmony is immediately qualified: “It is a poetical, not a historical, picture that Tagore here reveals to us to confirm his promise that a peace awaits us.”<sup>46</sup> Doubtless, it was such a poetic, peaceful, ahistoric atmosphere that appealed to the Western imagination of the East, “whose existence had long been conjectured.”<sup>47</sup> This conjecture, nevertheless, was not arbitrary on the part of the Committee. As a formal organization, it was obliged to justify Tagore’s comparability with great Western thinkers and writers, a qualification that was questioned by some contemporary Western critics upon the announcement of the Prize.<sup>48</sup>

He is, however, as far removed as anyone in our midst from all that we are accustomed to hear dispensed and purveyed in the marketplaces as Oriental philosophy, from painful dreams about the transmigration of souls and the impersonal *karma*, from the pantheistic, and in reality

---

<sup>45</sup> Horst Frenz ed., *Nobel Lectures, Literature 1901-1967*, p.131.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> Krishna Kripalani gives a brief account of those events in *Tagore: A Life*, p.129.

abstract, belief that is usually regarded as peculiarly characteristic of the higher civilization in India.<sup>49</sup>

The “good tidings” that Tagore brought from the East were differentiated from clichés of “Oriental philosophy,” and the latter was identified with “the transmigration of souls,” “the impersonal *karma*,” and “the pantheistic belief”—in brief, all elements considered to be heretic by Western theology. By detaching Tagore from problematic religious ideas and stressing his eagerness to “meet the living Father of the whole creation,” the Presentation Speech well embodies the relationship between Orientalism and religion: “the mystical,” argues Richard King, “a category that is often conceived to be preeminently ‘otherworldly,’ private and apolitical is in fact implicated in a network of power relations in the contexts in which it has been employed.”<sup>50</sup>

Furthermore, there is a significant connection to be observed in the Speech, that is, the East is equated with India, and India is equated with religion. Given the fact that Tagore was Indian and happened to be the first non-Westerner to win a Nobel Prize, it is natural to equate India with the East. As to the latter equation, it is almost trivial to dispute the richness of the religious culture of India, although the interpretation of the Speech is partial and manipulative. Nonetheless, an inevitable corollary from the two equations would be that the East is chiefly religious. Tagore, as a critical junction in the link, popularized and at the same time was restricted by this image. This corollary finds other textual evidence. For instance, the great Indian thinker and politician Jawaharlal Nehru (1889-1964) in *Glimpses of World History*, a collection of letters sent to his daughter from jail from 1931, writes:

We are apt to be taken in a little by the glitter of Europe and forget the past. Let us remember that it is Asia that has produced great leaders of thought who have influenced the world perhaps more than anyone or anything elsewhere—the great founders of the principal religions.<sup>51</sup>

---

<sup>49</sup> Horst Frenz ed., *Nobel Lectures, Literature 1901-1967*, p.131.

<sup>50</sup> Richard King, *Orientalism and Religion: Postcolonial Theory, India and “the Mystic East”* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), p.2.

<sup>51</sup> Jawaharlal Nehru, “Asia and Europe,” in *Glimpses of World History* (New Delhi: Penguin Books India, 2004), p.12.

It is truism that all major religions of the world came from that huge expanse called Asia, but Nehru's words are typical of the Asian discourse prevalent in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century: Asia is defined as an antithesis to Europe in terms of its profound religious resources. A more conspicuous example is the 1939 volume entitled *Eastern Religions & Western Thought*, a collection of philosophical treatises and lectures of Radhakrishnan.<sup>52</sup> There seems to be a functional difference between the Eastern and Western minds, although in the 1918 monograph on Tagore's philosophy he was already claiming that "[t]he popularity of the writings of Sir Rabindranath Tagore shows that there is neither East nor West in the realm of spirit, and that his work meets a general want and satisfies a universal demand."<sup>53</sup> Arguably, as both Nehru and Radhakrishnan were merely a generation younger than Tagore, both were well-versed in English and modern Western learning, and both became prominent on the Indian political stage, they were, like Tagore, involved in the same network of knowledge production that created the entrenched dichotomy between East and West. This network derived from the West's tradition of seeking a meaningful message from the East, "which—as Hegel put it—had 'existed for millennia in the imagination of the Europeans.' Friedrich Schlegel, Schelling, Herder, and Schopenhauer were only a few of the thinkers who followed the same pattern."<sup>54</sup>

This convention of demarcating East and West, more ideologically than geographically, is encapsulated by the German philosopher Karl Jaspers (1883-1969):

[T]he Western world and Islam, Europe and Asia, which was in turn split up into the Near, Middle and Far East, are the successive shapes taken by the antithesis, in which cultures and peoples simultaneously attract and repel one another. This antithesis has at all times been an element in the make-up of Europe, whereas the Orient merely took it over from Europe and understood it in a European sense.<sup>55</sup>

---

<sup>52</sup> Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, *Eastern Religions & Western Thought* (New Delhi: Oxford UP, 1990).

<sup>53</sup> Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, *The Philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore*, p.vii.

<sup>54</sup> Amartya Sen, "Tagore and His India," in *The Argumentative Indian: Writings on Indian History, Culture and Identity*, p.94.

<sup>55</sup> Karl Jaspers, Michael Bullock tr., *The Origin and Goal of History* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, 1953), p.68.

According to Jaspers, it was this propensity of creating antithesis and then searching for creative unity that distinguished Western history from those of others. Although appearing as a philosophical statement, there is no fundamental difference between Jaspers' observation and those of Yeats' and Tagore's in that the West gained its historical momentum from conflicting forces. As a forced "Other" of the West and inferior in terms of technological and military power in the modern era, the East saw many of its intellectuals defend their own cultures on spiritual grounds, a stance their Western counterparts generally agreed upon. In the case of Tagore, he received the Nobel laurel and identified himself unhesitatingly with the East, from whose bosom he believed he could bring a message of healing to the West. Yet a thorny problem remained. Besides a series of qualifiers—such as spiritual, peaceful, and introspective—that acquired their meanings in opposition to what were thought to be symptomatic of modern Western society—such as its being materialistic, combative, and overactive—the East lacks the coherence of consciousness and history that the West does possess:

My friends, you all know what a great force it is in Europe that these Western peoples have such a thing as the *continental concert of minds*. It is a very real power, this cultural cooperation and bond of intellectual fellowship. It is a very great fact in human history.<sup>56</sup>

Tagore was painfully aware of the vagueness of the idea of the East, and had priorities in forming an Oriental mind and culture. As shown above, the top two candidates on his list to form a union with India were Japan and China. However, there was an essential difference between his attitudes towards Japan and China, which also corresponded to intellectual trends in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Tagore's friendship with Japanese intellectuals started with Okakura Kakuzō, the art scholar and writer who visited Kolkata from 1901 to 1902. Okakura's Indian experiences led to the publication of *The Ideals of the East* in

---

<sup>56</sup> Rabindranath Tagore, "On Oriental Culture and Japan's Mission," in Mohit K. Ray ed., *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore, Volume VII: Lectures & Addresses*, p.825. My italics.

London in 1903, which in turn inspired Tagore's ideal of Asia. As a book on Asian art, its tone is idealistic and nostalgic:

The simple life of Asia need fear no shaming from that sharp contrast with Europe in which steam and electricity have placed it to-day...Asia knows, it is true, nothing of the fierce joys of a time-devouring locomotion, but she has still the far deeper travel-culture of the pilgrimage and the wandering monk.<sup>57</sup>

However, the core message of Okakura was a nationalistic one:

The history of Japanese art becomes thus the history of Asiatic ideals—the beach where each successive wave of Eastern thought has left its sand-ripple as it beat against the national consciousness.<sup>58</sup>

In the typical contrast between Asia and Europe, spiritual simplicity and technological sophistication, Okakura shared the optimism prevalent in early twentieth-century Japan owing to its thorough modernization and a newly-gained vantage in Asia. In short, Japan's assumption of an Asian role in contradistinction with Europe was based on its successful imitation of the latter. Whether Tagore discerned the nationalistic bent in Okakura's discourse or not, Japan's modernization, or more precisely, Westernization, became a usual target of criticism in many of his speeches. In 1916, Tagore showed anxiety about an overly Westernized Japan;<sup>59</sup> in a 1929 lecture in Tokyo, he tried to temper Japan's growing jingoism by reminding his audience of Okakura's idealism.<sup>60</sup>

In contrast, Asian discourse was not a popular genre in early twentieth-century China for historical reasons. On the one hand, as a long-time hegemonic power in its world order, China did not have to build a self-image in relation to its neighbors, as Japan strove to do; on the other, it was not obliged

---

<sup>57</sup> Okakura Kakuzō, *The Ideals of the East*, in *Okakura Kakuzō: Collected English Writings*, Vol.1, p.129.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p.16.

<sup>59</sup> Rabindranath Tagore, "Nationalism in Japan," in *Nationalism*, pp.63-114.

<sup>60</sup> Rabindranath Tagore, "On Oriental Culture and Japan's Mission," in Mohit K. Ray ed., *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore, Volume VII: Lectures & Addresses*, pp.822-830.

to define itself against a Western colonizer like India did. Critically, most of the remarks on Asian union made by Chinese intellectuals at that time consisted of two interconnected themes: blame for the militaristic pan-Asianism gaining dominance in Japan, and a demand that Japan conform to the moral decency that were held to be Chinese—thus traditional East Asian—norms.<sup>61</sup> Given China's political disadvantage vis-à-vis modernization, Tagore's speeches in China tended to appeal to the past glory of the East and the future blossoming of its noble, enduring humanism, with mild warnings against whole-scale Westernization.

Geographical proximity, historical interaction, and personal affinity to Japan and China all account for Tagore's desire to create an Asian alliance with these two countries. But viewed historically, it is obvious that his choices were influenced by a deeper structure of knowledge. In his conversation with Feng Youlan in 1920, Tagore roughly categorized China, India, Japan as "Eastern Asia," and categorized Persia and the Arabic world as "Western Asia."<sup>62</sup> For convenience's sake, he told Feng that they could focus on the eastern part of Asia for the time being. As an Indian, such a division of Asia was not immune from political concern. In 1916 he said in Tokyo:

I cannot but bring to your mind those days when the whole of Eastern Asia from Burma to Japan was united with India in the closest tie of friendship...through which messages ran between us about the deepest needs of humanity.<sup>63</sup>

This appeal did not differ from those of Chinese intellectuals in their efforts to claim the moral and cultural authority in the East to which Japan was supposed to defer. Stephen Hay's comment is particularly to the point here: "Each Asian Orientophile...entertained a somewhat different notion of the essential features of this civilization, his image of the East consisting usually of an expanded version of those particular traditions he most wished to revitalize."<sup>64</sup> That the western part of Asia was not included in this alliance was,

---

<sup>61</sup> See Chapter 8 for a thorough discussion of this issue.

<sup>62</sup> Feng Youlan, "Yu Indu Taiguer tanhua: dongxiwenming zhi bijiaoguan," in *Sansongtang quanji*, Vol.11, p.4.

<sup>63</sup> Rabindranath Tagore, "Nationalism in Japan," in *Nationalism*, p.75.

<sup>64</sup> Stephen Hay, *Asian Ideas of East and West: Tagore and His Critics in Japan, China, and India*, p.315.

perhaps, not merely a matter of convenience:

Eastern Asia has been pursuing its own path, evolving its own civilization, which was not political but social, not predatory and mechanically efficient, but spiritual and based upon all the varied and deeper relations of humanity.<sup>65</sup>

Whenever Tagore talked about “Eastern Asia,” it was always in conjunction with “humanity,” which, however, was supposed to be applicable to the whole East in his own scheme of civilization. There was no reason to omit “Western Asia” in the above statement. Therefore, perhaps it is not far-fetched to recall Edward Said’s argument that India was treated by European Orientalists as a submissive object, with their sense of danger being reserved for the Islamic part of Orient.<sup>66</sup> As a scion to a Westernized family in Bengal, Tagore must have inherited this intellectual world map of the contemporary West and privileged India, China, and Japan to form his ideal Asia, albeit he was strongly sympathetic towards Muslims given their huge presence in India.

Moreover, while Tagore observed similarities between Chinese and Indian traditions, Japan was included as an ally mainly for a functional reason: its successful modern transformation that witnessed the undying vigor of the East. This, again, dovetails with the view of world history prevalent in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. In Jaspers’ argument, China and India, two giant Eastern civilizations, constitute perennial contrasts with the West:

China and India always lived in continuity with their own past; Greece, on the other hand, lived beyond its own past in continuity with an alien, Oriental past.<sup>67</sup>

Here derives a critical conclusion. While Asia (China and India) tended to define itself in its own terms, thus becoming stagnant, the West (Greece) incessantly sought a self-image in its changing relationships with the “Other” (mainly Asia), thus allowing for continual self-renewal. This observation serves

---

<sup>65</sup> Rabindranath Tagore, “Nationalism in Japan,” in *Nationalism*, p.85.

<sup>66</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism*, p.75.

<sup>67</sup> Karl Jaspers, *The Origin and Goal of History*, p.59.



to perpetuate Jaspers' theory that ancient China, India, and Greece all belonged to the "axial age civilizations," each experiencing a spiritual breakthrough independently from 800 to 200 BCE to form a mainstream civilization that was to assimilate peripheral cultures. While Western civilization—a combination of the Greek and Jewish axes—was capable of a self-triggered transformation that is called modernization, China and India did not possess this momentum of radical transformation. Although Japan did not feature in Jaspers' 1949 monograph *The Origin and Goal of History*, later interpreters of the axial age theory, especially S. N. Eisenstadt (1923-2010) and Robert Bellah (1927-2013), credit much significance to Japan for its uniqueness: being a non-axial civilization but capable of a modernization almost as complete and successful as that of the core Western countries.<sup>68</sup> It seems that Tagore belonged to this intellectual lineage, only with some Eastern variation.

Some explanations of Tagore's world view are necessary before ending this section. While he adhered to the West-originated East-West dichotomy, as a laurelled prophet and self-appointed cultural messenger, his proposition of harmonious fusion between the two hemispheres was as realistic as humanistic and spiritual.

He never simplistically opposed the West. His main objection was directed at nationalism and materialism, which not only ravaged the non-Western world but suffocated the noble humanity of the West as well. In China, Tagore claimed that the "impertinence of material things is extremely old. The revelation of spirit in man is modern: I am on its side, for I am modern."<sup>69</sup> His dialectical view of modernization was even more eloquently expressed in Japan:

I must warn them that modernizing is a mere affectation of modernism...It is nothing but mimicry, only affectation is louder than the original...One must bear in mind, that those who have the true modern spirit need not modernize, just as those who are truly brave are not braggarts.<sup>70</sup>

---

<sup>68</sup> See Chapter 7 for a detailed discussion on Jasper's and Eisenstadt's views on world history.

<sup>69</sup> Rabindranath Tagore, "Talks in China," in Mohit K. Ray ed., *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore, Volume IV: Essays*, p.779.

<sup>70</sup> Rabindranath Tagore, "Nationalism in Japan," in *Nationalism*, p.93.

Finally, apart from being a great interpreter of the mystic *Upanishads*, Tagore's appreciation of Hinduism was sociologically or even anthropologically oriented:

India tried her best to respect the social freedom of all the individual sections of the population contained within her boundaries, while claiming allegiance to one social autocracy. This has produced a stupendous organisation, named Hinduism, which is almost impossible to define. It contains under its shelter manners and customs and creeds, varied and contradictory...If we must know where this spirit abides, it is not so much in ritualism and customs, — it is in ideas.<sup>71</sup>

Apparently, while remaining idealistic and spiritual, Tagore's proposition of an Eastern or Asian culture was more than a slogan. He well understood the achievement of Indology in France and Germany,<sup>72</sup> but he urged a cordial mutual understanding between East and West, which motivated him to establish Visva-Bharati University. Unfortunately, his initial image in the West proved too narrow for an accurate evaluation of his broad concerns. Responsibility for this limited view of Tagore lies both in his manner of self-representation and in the general intellectual ambience prevalent in the early twentieth-century West.

## 2.5 Tagore in the East-West Paradigm

Edward Thompson had a definite view of the reasons for Tagore's biased image in the West:

First, he [i.e. Thompson] blamed Yeats for representing Tagore as only a mystic poet, and Tagore for conceding that image. Second, he held Tagore responsible for his translation methods of cutting away whatever he thought was difficult for western readers. Third,

---

<sup>71</sup> Rabindranath Tagore, *The Message of India to Japan: A Lecture* (New York: Macmillan, 1916), p.20.

<sup>72</sup> Rabindranath Tagore, "An Eastern University," in *Creative Unity*, p.179.

Thompson argued that Tagore's poetry was bound to date swiftly as it came to judgement in the age of the First World War...<sup>73</sup>

While all the three observations can be generally agreed upon, the cultural and historical backgrounds of this (mis)representation need to be reviewed in this concluding section.

In a letter to Thompson, Tagore stated that Yeats was responsible for selecting the poems to be included in the English version of *Gitanjali*.<sup>74</sup> There were many similarities between the Indian and Irish poets that impelled the latter to choose what he thought represented the best of the former.<sup>75</sup> However, the basic question is, as *Gitanjali* represents only a tiny portion of Tagore's tremendous literary output, why did he choose to translate these poems rather than others for a few select readers in London? Of course he might have wanted to present a solemn, mystic image, but this conclusion only deserves passing consideration, for Tagore was almost unknown outside Bengal at that time. Therefore, a more reasonable assumption would be that those poems were particularly dear to the poet and were thought to be translatable, perhaps more in spirit than in language as he could not hope to replicate the original meter.<sup>76</sup> This suggests that there is a universal character pervading the mystic poems, which appealed to many Westerners of different tastes, including Yeats, Pound, Gide, as well as the Nobel Prize Committee.

That the initial praise from Yeats, Pound, and the Committee of Tagore all sound similar—despite critical differences in details—indicates a general Western preference that was not attributable to any particular propaganda about Tagore's mystic image. In this sense, what Yeats embodied was a collective endeavor of the West to represent the East, notwithstanding the fact that he was also caught between empire and colony, and gravely troubled by issues of nationalism and identity. Romain Rolland, one of the best-known

---

<sup>73</sup> Edward Thompson published two critical biographies of Tagore in 1921 and 1926 respectively. For the first one, see note 24; the second one is *Rabindranath Tagore: Poet and Dramatist*. The summary is given in Uma Das Gupta ed., *A Difficult Friendship: Letters of Edward Thompson and Rabindranath Tagore 1913-1940*, p.15.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, p.52. The letter is dated 18 November 1913.

<sup>75</sup> A brief analysis can be found in Harold M. Hurwitz, "Yeats and Tagore," in *Comparative Literature*, Vol. 16, No. 1 (Winter, 1964), pp. 55-64.

<sup>76</sup> Confirmed by the following statement in a letter from Tagore to his niece: "I simply felt an urge to recapture through the medium of another language the feelings and sentiments which had created such a feast of joy within me in the days gone by." Cited from Krishna Kripalani, *Tagore: A Life*, p.123.

mystics and kindred spirits of Tagore in early twentieth-century Europe, gave an in-depth account of the Indian poet:

Tagore is scarcely known in France save through the solemn face of the Poet-Prophet, that imposing figure veiled in mystery, whose calm voice, harmonious gestures, and luminous brown eyes shaded by dark brows, radiate a serene majesty...When Europe thinks of the great Inspired Ones of India, she only bears in mind their seriousness...It is we, blockheads from the West, who fix our features in a uniformly serious solemnity. Their sacred legends laugh...Tagore was born in a tragic age in which is being decided the destiny of humanity, and particularly of his own multifarious people...That is why words of poetic and prophetic inspiration take the foremost place in his creation, and he has attached less importance to his works of observation. Europe has taken little notice of the latter; for while the poems and the great essays are of a universal appeal, the field of observation in his novels and short stories is naturally Indian...<sup>77</sup>

Rolland's portrayal is quoted at length to show how a leading Western mind was reflecting on an extraordinary moment of cultural interaction in the modern era. Rolland well understood how Tagore posed himself and was mythologized; he knew the stereotype of the East in Europe; he observed the versatility of Tagore and proposed a wider reading of the poet's socially-oriented works, along with those of other great Indian minds: "Aurobindo Ghose, Jagadish Chunder Bose,—and that saint the Mahatma."<sup>78</sup> This account is dated November 1924, eleven years after Tagore's meteoric rise to fame, so Rolland was addressing an international image of Tagore that had crystallized over time. In inter-war Germany, where the fervor about Tagore was second to no other European country, including Britain, there was a mystic Oriental air about the poet: "When the noise of battle [i.e. WWI] had just died down,...a man came to them [i.e. the Germans] from a world unknown, which to their knowledge or dreams was a home of fairy-tales, of magic, of adventures, of mysteries, and talked to

---

<sup>77</sup> Romain Rolland, Alex Aronson tr., "On Rabindranath Tagore," in Alex Aronson and Krishna Kripalani eds., *Rolland and Tagore* (Calcutta: Visva-Bharati, 1945), pp.3-5.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p.6.

them,...he made them feel the giant breath of nature and the power of loving nearness.”<sup>79</sup> Such a public image of Tagore, as mentioned, began to circulate as early as 1912, and was sanctioned by the surprising 1913 Nobel Prize in Literature.

Politically, the Prize earned Tagore a reputation overnight, but put him on a Procrustean bed as well. The Committee tried hard to incorporate Tagore’s literary achievement in British civilization, and to attribute the revival of Eastern thought, languages, and literatures to Christian missionaries. Therefore, even if the Committee was sincere in its intention to bring together the two hemispheres, the effort turned out to embody the conventional and highly institutionalized practice of Orientalism.

Culturally, since it was the West that gave Tagore an unprecedented chance to speak for the East, he was compelled—to a certain degree—to cling to the mystic image favored by the West to keep his vantage for speaking. This, paradoxically, was conducive to the very undoing of Tagore’s own universalism because he was obliged to define the East in constant contrast to the West. In other words, in spite of the claim that “[f]or me my East is the poet’s East, not that of a politician or scholar,”<sup>80</sup> Tagore (unwittingly perhaps) became the greatest agent of self-Orientalism in his time.

As discussed in Section 2, it took only a few months for Pound to turn satirical about Tagore. The mysticism suited Western needs well but was contrary to Pound’s own aesthetic standards. Nonetheless, Pound’s depreciation of public taste did not detach him from an entrenched structure in which Yeats and the Nobel Prize Committee were also involved. In 1913 Pound wrote:

As a religious teacher he is superfluous. We’ve got Lao Tse [i.e. *Laozi* 老子]. And his (Tagore’s) philosophy hasn’t much in it for a man who has “felt the pangs” or been pestered with Western civilization.<sup>81</sup>

Whether Tagore’s message has soothing power is a matter of personal taste. However, no essential difference exists between Pound’s comment and the

---

<sup>79</sup> Theodor Heuss, “Tagore and Germany,” in *A Centenary Volume: Rabindranath Tagore*, p.321.

<sup>80</sup> Rabindranath Tagore, *Letters to a Friend*, collected in Mohit K. Ray ed., *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore, Volume VI: Essays, Lectures, Addresses*, p.376.

<sup>81</sup> See note 15.

expectation of “good tidings” from the remote East; *Laozi* or Tagore’s interpretation of the *Upanishads* were simply alternatives from a functional East. This functional East-West dichotomy was further confirmed by Yeats’ words:

Your poems, as you know, came to me as a great excitement; and of recent years I have found wisdom and beauty, or both, in your prose...and life, when I think of it as separated from all that is not itself, from all that is complicated and mechanical, takes to my imagination an Asiatic form. That form I found first in your books and afterwards in certain Chinese poetry and Japanese prose writers.<sup>82</sup>

Not only did Yeats equate Asia with spirituality, but the constituents of that spiritual Asia—that is, India, China, and Japan—corresponded exactly to those of Tagore. This stereotype, as argued in Section 4, had been extant for a long time in the West and obtained decisive form in the modern age. Tagore’s rise and fall in popularity was simply part of another round of the West’s search in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century for spiritual consolation from the Far East. Both Tagore and Yeats were merely agents of this historical trend, and as such, could do no more to influence its momentum than frame the Indian poet’s image in the Western imagination.

---

<sup>82</sup> W. B. Yeats, untitled, in Ramananda Chatterjee ed., *The Golden Book of Tagore: A Homage to Rabindranath Tagore from India and the World in Celebration of His Seventieth Birthday*, p. 269.



## Part II

### Tagore and His “Eastern Asia”: Japan





### 3. Tagore's *Nihonjinron* and International Opinion on Asia in the Inter-War Period

#### 3.1 Overview

Part I of the dissertation combines historical accounts, research reviews, and critical analyses. Chapter 1 examines the process whereby Tagore became the representative of the East, and how this image has resulted in oversimplification of the Indian polymath for a century. Chapter 2 deals with the critical concept of spirituality that characterized this process, and argues that Tagore's articulation of Asia actually served to enhance the Western mechanism of Orientalism. The four chapters in Parts II and III delve deeper into specific contexts, aiming to reconstruct Tagore's involvement in the intellectual histories of modern Japan and China. As will be demonstrated, the idea of "the East" or "Asia" loomed large in the interaction. Such a task of reconstruction is carried out through extensive comparison of the ideas of Tagore with those of many contemporary intellectual leaders, both Eastern and Western.

When Rabindranath Tagore criticized Western nationalism in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, a main reference for his argumentation was an Eastern country, Japan. By examining Tagore's comments on Japanese culture and politics against the genre of *Nihonjinron* 日本人論 (theory of Japaneseness),<sup>1</sup> this chapter explores Japan's ambiguous image in the modern world. To this end, it is necessary to compare the views of Japan and its subtle relationship with the idea of Asia held by other contemporary luminaries, such as John Dewey and Bertrand Russell.

While studies on Tagore's relationship with Japan must take mutual depictions into consideration, to make the argument more cogent, it seems appropriate to divide the topic into two interconnected projects. The first takes a chronological view that weaves the fluctuations in Japanese attitudes towards Tagore from the 1910s till the present day into the context of the modern

---

<sup>1</sup> Sugimoto Yoshio's translation of the term is adopted here. See *An Introduction to Japanese Society, Third Edition* (Melbourne: Cambridge UP, 2010), p.2. Here the original plural form is changed into the singular. Sugimoto's view of *Nihonjinron* from a sociological perspective will be discussed in Section 2.

intellectual history of Japan. The second takes a synchronological view to analyze the ideological characteristics of Tagore's theory of Japaneseness, and to compare it with observations made by contemporaneous Western thinkers who were held in high regard in Japanese academic circle at the time. This chapter takes a synchronological approach, leaving the elaboration of a chronological treatment to Chapter 4. The two approaches also differ in their references. The words of international figures form the backbone of this project, whereas various comments and studies that reflect the vicissitudes of attitudes towards Tagore in Japan constitute the object of analysis in the other.

The theory of Japaneseness, or *Nihonjinron*, is not an inclusive term. It refers to a specific genre that aims to portray the "Japanese character" in order to stress its uniqueness. Tagore never had any intention to develop this genre. However, the style of his expression is reminiscent of the *Nihonjinron* prevalent at the time, and as such, demands inquiry into their similarities and differences, as well as the historical circumstances that prompted the genre to thrive. Historically speaking, Tagore's *Nihonjinron* was a conscious echo of the ideal of "Asia is one" proposed by Okakura Kakuzō at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (their friendship started in 1901 during Okakura's India trip and lasted until the latter's death in 1913).<sup>2</sup> In *The Ideal of the East*, a book that drew inspiration from the author's sojourn in India in 1902 and was published in 1903, Okakura gives Asian history a shape by narrating how the thought and artistic styles of India and China had developed, and how they had been fused together and raised to a new height in Japan. With the passage of time, Okakura's original ideal—nostalgic as well as nationalistic—had strayed into imperialist pan-Asianism when Tagore visited Japan in 1916. It continued to develop along this vein, a fact of which the Indian poet was aware and tried to caution his Japanese audiences against it. Therefore, although Tagore's lectures concentrated on Japan's significant role in the expected rise of Asia, they were no less warnings issued against Japanese militarization. In this regard, while Tagore's comments share some traits with other *Nihonjinron* superficially, they are in sharp contrast in terms of purpose and intellectual premise. To illuminate Tagore's particular formulation of *Nihonjinron*, with its deliberate linkage to the

---

<sup>2</sup> Okakura Kakuzō, *The Ideals of the East*, in *Okakura Kakuzo: Collected English Writings*, Vol.1, p.13. For detailed analyses of the exchanges of ideas between Tagore and Okakura, see: Rustom Bharucha, *Another Asia: Rabindranath Tagore & Okakura Tenshin*.

ideal of Asia, Dewey's and Russell's observations of China and Japan will be drawn in comparison.

Tagore, Dewey, and Russell all visited Japan and China within a few years around the end of WWI. It was a period when Japan was rising rapidly to an international power but still many years away from its full-scale invasion of China. Intellectual activities were thriving in both countries, with foreign ideas imported and foreign thinkers invited; among the visitors were Tagore, Dewey, and Russell. The welcomes and propaganda accorded to them were tremendous, at least in the beginning. Besides expounding their philosophical thought, they travelled around and formulated their civilizational observations as well. It is precisely because they were neither professional analysts nor political critics that their impressions of the Far East<sup>3</sup>—gained from short-term visits, exchanges with local figures, and reading of relevant books—came to be typical of the overarching civilizational discourses prevalent during the inter-war period, which might lack precision and even depth but constitute a significant episode of modern intellectual history. Critically, Japan's ambiguous position in the East-West dichotomy finds very different interpretations in the three luminaries' portraits of world civilizations. The differences, as I will argue, reflect how the idea of Asia was characterized in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century from different political stances.

### 3.2 Intellectual Basis of *Nihonjinron* and Tagore's View of Japan

To better understand Tagore's view of Japan in the context of early-twentieth-century world politics, a review of the intellectual foundation of *Nihonjinron* and Tagore's semi-missionary overseas tours after becoming world-famous is necessary. Such a review aims to sketch the overlap between the increase of Japan's national confidence and the formulation of Tagore's one-Asia ideology in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

In *An Introduction to Japanese Society*, Sugimoto Yoshio describes *Nihonjinron* as “a discourse that...has persisted as the long-lasting paradigm that regards Japan as a uniquely homogeneous society.”<sup>4</sup> This concise

---

<sup>3</sup> “East Asia” as a term had not yet gained currency at the time of their visits. This issue will be discussed in Section 4.

<sup>4</sup> Sugimoto Yoshio, *An Introduction to Japanese Society, Third Edition*, p.2.

description grasps the spirit of such discourse to define Japanese society as essentially homogeneous. The adverb “uniquely” is not to be overlooked. The literature not only portrays Japan as homogeneous but also distinguishes it from other societies as uniquely so. Among the features that are said to underlie Japan’s homogeneity some are often heard, such as dependence on superiors, vertical loyalties, group orientation, “consensus society,” etc.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, Sugimoto also specifies certain assumptions undergirding these studies:

First, it is presumed that *all* Japanese share the attribute in question...Second, it is also assumed that there is virtually no variation among the Japanese in the degree to which they possess the characteristic in question...Third, the trait in question...is supposed to exist only marginally in other societies...Finally, the fourth presupposition is an ahistorical assumption that the trait has prevailed in Japan for an unspecified period of time, independently of historical circumstances.<sup>6</sup>

The purpose of Sugimoto’s book is to challenge stereotypes about Japan and reveal the complexity of Japanese society, with “homogeneity assumptions” of *Nihonjinron* ranking at the top of those stereotypes. In a monograph of *Nihonjinron* studies, Harumi Befu also pithily characterizes this genre as “hegemony of homogeneity” and explains that “*Nihonjinron* writings share a singular objective: to demonstrate unique qualities of Japanese culture, Japanese society, and the Japanese people...As such, little or no attention is given in writings of this genre to internal variation, whether along the line of religion, class, gender, rural or urban settings, or any other criterion.”<sup>7</sup>

As a sociologist, Sugimoto adopts statistical methods to demythologize the *Nihonjinron* paradigm without examining it in historical terms. Befu’s anthropologic studies mainly focus on the reproduction of this literature in the post-war period. In this regard, Minami Hiroshi’s 南博 (1914-2001) *Nihonjinron*:

---

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p.3.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p.4.

<sup>7</sup> Harumi Befu, *Hegemony of Homogeneity: An Anthropological Analysis of Nihonjinron* (Melbourne: Trans Pacific Press, 2001), p.4. The idea of Japanese homogeneity has greater historical nuances; for a detailed examination of this issue, see Oguma Eiji 小熊英二, *Tanitsu minzoku shinwa no kigen: Nihonjin no jigazou no keifu* 単一民族神話の起源—日本人の自画像の系譜 (The Myth of the Homogeneous Nation) (sic.) (Tokyo: Shinyōsha, 1995).

*From the Meiji Era to the Present* critically reviews the development of the genre over a much longer time span. Minami declared: “This book attempts to trace objectively the development of *Nihonjinron* from the Meiji Restoration until the present day [i.e. the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, or more precisely, the passing away of the Showa Emperor in 1989]. It can be said that the outcome is equivalent to a modern history of self-consciousness possessed by the Japanese.”<sup>8</sup> Minami did not intend to trace the genre to its origin but focused on the modern (and perhaps postmodern) period as witnessing the flourishing and ramifying of *Nihonjinron*. After examining hundreds of representative works, he concluded:

*Nihonjinron* rose to prominence concomitant to great social transformations from the Meiji era; every time international affairs took place, Japanese consciousness of their nation in contrast to foreign nations heightened...With the intent to catch up with and surpass advanced countries, there emerged a self-understanding and self-reflection on the part of the Japanese nation and people based on comparisons with Western countries.<sup>9</sup>

Miyake Setsurei 三宅雪嶺 (1860-1945) provides an apropos example to illustrate the above statement. Addressing a Meiji Japan that was confronted with increasing Western challenges, he published both *The True, Good, and Beautiful Japanese* and *The False, Bad, Ugly Japanese* in 1891. The two books emphasize contrasting characteristics of the Japanese people, but their purposes converge. As a nationalistic traditionalist, Miyake expected the Japanese sense of the true, the good, and the beautiful to contribute to a more harmonious world, while reminding the Japanese people of their less favorable aspects that might prevent that expectation from being fulfilled. He concluded that “Even if we tried our best to imitate, our country would become nothing more than an inferior Western country, and our people an inferior Western people. The result would be a mere increase in inferior Western races. Ah! Is this what Nature, which fosters both heaven and earth, really intends?”<sup>10</sup> In a

---

<sup>8</sup> Minami Hiroshi, *Nihonjinron: Meiji kara konnichi made* 日本人論—明治から今日まで (*Nihonjinron: From the Meiji Era to the Present*), (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1994), p.v.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p.391.

<sup>10</sup> Miyake Setsurei, *Gi, aku, shū Nihonjin* 偽悪醜日本人 (The False, Bad, Ugly Japanese), in

1907 work, Haga Yaichi 芳賀矢一 (1867-1927) also enumerated ten virtues of the Japanese people—loyalty to the emperor and the nation, respect for ancestors and family reputation, realism, love of nature, optimism, candidness, subtlety, neatness, courtesy and etiquette, and being kind and forgiving—and hoped for their preservation in the process of Japan's interaction with other cultures.<sup>11</sup>

*Nihonjinron* became a major genre during the Meiji era, but this period is not to be mistaken for its inception. Indeed, one of the earliest authors of *Nihonjinron* mentioned by Minami is the Edo period scholar Motoori Norinaga 本居宣長 (1730-1801), who, by contrasting the Japanese temperament with the Chinese, claimed a uniquely aesthetic psychology of the Japanese.<sup>12</sup> However far back its historical roots may lie, it can be observed that *Nihonjinron* is a discourse that differentiates Japan from others, whether China or the West, while assuming little self-differentiation within Japan. Admittedly, the idea of Japanese homogeneity has greater historical nuances and not every scholar agrees on the established view of *Nihonjinron*.<sup>13</sup> Nevertheless, concerning the ideological and historical backgrounds of this genre, the delineation above is sufficient to introduce us to the world that Tagore addressed.

Rabindranath Tagore received the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1913. Born to an aristocratic family in Kolkata, the cultural capital of British India, Tagore was well educated in both Indian classics and modern Western disciplines from an early age. Keen awareness of the conflict between Eastern and Western civilizations was deeply rooted in his mind. Given the circumstances, the Nobel Prize gave him worldwide fame and allowed him unprecedented opportunities to travel around the world and exchange ideas with contemporary intellectuals.

Tagore's first overseas tour after becoming the Nobel laureate took place in 1916. The United States was his destination but he stayed in Japan for three

---

Ikumatsu Keizō 生松敬三 ed., *Nihonjinron* 日本人論 (Theories of Japaneseness) (Tokyo: Fuzambō, 1977), p.123.

<sup>11</sup> Haga Yaichi, *Kokuminsei jūron* 国民性十論 (Ten Theses on the Japanese Character), in Ikumatsu Keizō ed., *Nihonjinron*, pp.262-263.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p.5.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Oguma Eiji 小熊英二, *Tanitsu minzoku shinwa no kigen: Nihonjin no jigazou no keifu* 単一民族神話の起源—日本人の自画像の系譜 (The Myth of the Homogeneous Nation) (sic.), (Tokyo: Shinyōsha, 1995). Furthermore, as such a literature and relevant studies exist in abundance, no characterizations are indisputable. For example, Sugimoto's and Minami's views differ on the very foundations of *Nihonjinron*. As a sociologist, Sugimoto tends to disavow any credulous homogeneity of Japan, but Minami, as a psychologist, seems to acknowledge a collective Japanese mindset.

months en route.<sup>14</sup> Of the three public lectures Tagore gave there, the last two that were delivered in Tokyo later became part of his famous *Nationalism*. Besides, in a series of lectures published in 1922, Tagore in his articulation of “East and West” refers to Japan as accommodating the traditional and modern worlds at the same time, with the latter eroding the ideal and humanity of the former.<sup>15</sup> Hence, disharmony and prospective fusion between Eastern and Western civilizations find intensive expression in Tagore’s depiction of Japan. Although many studies have elucidated Tagore’s relationship with Japan, the critical role that Japan plays in shaping Tagore’s civilizational discourse seems to deserve more elaboration, and is thus the subject of the next section.

It is not without precedent to characterize Tagore’s depiction of Japan as *Nihonjinron*. It has been suggested that his *Japan Travelogue* “can be counted as one of the early examples of *Nihonjinron* authored by foreign intellectuals.”<sup>16</sup> While *Japan Travelogue* consists of private letters, it does not differ from Tagore’s public lectures in its attempt to discover the uniqueness of Japan and to weave it into his overarching discourse whenever appropriate.

In choosing *Nihonjinron* written by foreigners for analysis, Minami explains his criteria that “consideration is limited to those translated works of great influence...Even though some books caused enthusiasm at the time of their publication, if they contain no distinctive views, they will not be considered here.”<sup>17</sup> It is true that Tagore’s works, both collected lectures and private letters, are not in monograph forms exploring so-called Japaneseness, but the fact that Minami does not mention his name may imply that the Indian poet’s comments are either considered insignificant or lacking in insight. Actually, Tagore could hardly claim any genuine knowledge of Japan, as Stephen Hay notes:

---

<sup>14</sup> For a review of this Japan-America trip, see Morimoto Tatsuo 森本達雄, “Tagōru no daiikkai sekai junrei: Nihon-Amerika hōmon tenmatsuki” タゴールの第一回世界巡礼—日本＝アメリカ訪問顛末記 (Tagore’s First World Tour: A Description of His Visits to Japan and America), in *Tagōru chosakushū, bekkān: Tagōru kenkyū* タゴール著作集・別巻—タゴール研究 (Collected Works of Tagore, Supplementary Volume: Tagore Studies) (Tokyo: Daisan Bunmeisha, 1993), pp.309-343.

<sup>15</sup> Rabindranath Tagore, “East and West,” in *Creative Unity*, p.97.

<sup>16</sup> Morimoto Tatsuo, “Kaidai” 解題 (Explanatory Note), in *Tagōru chosakushū daijūkan: jiden, kaisō, ryokōki* タゴール著作集・第十巻—自伝・回想・旅行記 (Collected Works of Tagore, Volume 10: Autobiographies, Reminiscences, and Travelogues) (Tokyo: Daisan Bunmeisha, 1987), p.606. There is another publication in 1987 regarding Tagore’s *Nationalism* as a *Nihonron* 日本論 (theory of Japan); see Saeki Shōichi 佐伯彰一, Haga Tōru 芳賀徹, eds., *Gaikokujin ni yoru Nihonron no meicho* 外国人による日本論の名著 (Masterpieces of Theory of Japan by Foreigners) (Tokyo: Chūō Kōronsha, 1987), pp.120-125.

<sup>17</sup> Minami Hiroshi, *Nihonjinron: Meiji kara konnichi made*, pp.v-vi.



Bringing with him a preconceived notion of what constituted the essence of “the East,” he tried to impose it on a country he had never seen before and of whose rich and complex culture, customs, and institutions he had very little knowledge.<sup>18</sup>

Hay is correct in pointing out that Tagore mainly described Japan in preconceived terms that fit his East-West framework. Nonetheless, deeper exploration indicates that what obliged Tagore to forge his overarching discourse was the same trend that fueled the proliferation of *Nihonjinron*, albeit the intentions to foreground Japan’s uniqueness differed. In view of Japan’s successful modernization, Tagore charged the country with the dual responsibility of moderating the materialistic aspect of the West and endowing the East with a reinvigorated spirit. On the other hand, the East-West dialectics was also visible in both Miyake’s and Haga’s *Nihonjinron* cited above, but it was addressed more in terms of the tension between the nationalistic and the universalistic. Historically, this tension persisted through the 1910s and the 1920s, and the nationalistic bent emerged into fascist *Nihonjinron* later.<sup>19</sup> For example, in 1930 Ōkawa Shūmei 大川周明 (1886-1957) appealed to his audiences that “what I would like to see is the revival of an upright and strong Japan, which will defeat the evil [i.e. Western influences] that dominates the world.”<sup>20</sup>

### 3.3 Tagore’s “Nationalism in Japan” and Beyond

When Tagore paid his first visit to Japan in 1916, Japan had already become the strongest non-Western country in the world in terms of economic

---

<sup>18</sup> Stephen Hay, *Asian Ideas of East and West: Tagore and His Critics in Japan, China, and India*, p.122.

<sup>19</sup> Minami Hiroshi, *Nihonjinron: Meiji kara konnichi made*, pp.111, 391. In Japan, as well as in Minami’s book, the period from the early 1910s to the mid-1920s is referred to by the Japanese era name of Taishō, which is followed by the Showa era from 1926 to 1989. In many respects, the reign names mark different phases of modern Japanese history. In addition, Harumi Bifu divides the history of *Nihonjinron* from the 18<sup>th</sup> century into five clear-cut periods, see: “Nationalism and *Nihonjinron*,” in Harumi Bifu ed., *Cultural Nationalism in East Asia: Representation and Identity* (Berkeley: Institute of East Asian Studies, U of California, 1993), p.125.

<sup>20</sup> Ōkawa Shūmei, *Nihon no genkō* 日本の言行 (Japan’s Words and Deeds), in *Ōkawa Shūmei zenshū: daiikkan* 大川周明全集・第一巻 (Complete Works of Ōkawa Shūmei, Vol. 1) (Tokyo: Iwazaki Shobō, 1962), p.401.

and military prowess. As the subjects of Tagore's first systematic elaboration on issues concerning East *versus* West in the capacity of a foreign luminary through the *lingua franca* of English, the Japanese witnessed a *Nihonjinron* different from the kind to which they were accustomed. Tagore's speeches were figurative and flowery, which might have bewildered many Japanese in his audiences. Nonetheless, his message was clear and he organized his three public lectures into a coherent argument. Complementing extant studies of Tagore's warnings to Japan, I will demonstrate the inner logic of Tagore's public addresses in 1916 and interpret them in the context of *Nihonjinron*.

The first public speech, delivered in Osaka on June 1, was introductory but only partly complimentary. Tagore said he had been dreaming of visiting Japan, "where the East and the West found their meeting place and carried on their courtship far enough to give assurance of a wedding."<sup>21</sup> This overseas voyage reminded him of the adventures of ancient Buddhist monks who brought the truths of life from India, through China, to Japan at the easternmost end. While those scriptures were transmitted with great difficulty, they retained their simplicity in full wisdom and love. In contrast, modern technology, which shortened both spatial and temporal distance, simply multiplied things without facilitating access to their cores: "All the odds and ends, the vast waste materials of civilization floating about it, have created a growing barrier, not only shutting out our deeper nature but smothering it to a great extent."<sup>22</sup> Tagore complained that what greeted his eyes when his ship was docking in Kobe was not different from what he had seen in major Western cities. "But this is not Japan,"<sup>23</sup> thus claimed the poet with his determination to discover the uniqueness of the country.

The second lecture, "The Message of India to Japan," was given at Tokyo Imperial University on June 11. Tagore started with words of gratitude to Japan for rejuvenating Asia. He then adapted this rejuvenation to an overarching framework, in which both Eastern and Western civilizations have lifecycles. After contributing to social, political, and religious ideals, Eastern civilizations became inactive and bound in tradition, until "[o]ne morning the whole world looked up in surprise, when Japan broke through her walls of old habits in a

---

<sup>21</sup> Rabindranath Tagore, "India and Japan," in Supriya Roy ed., *Talks in Japan: A Collection of Addresses Given in Japan – 1916, 1924, 1929* (Kolkata: Shizen, 2007), p.29.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p.31.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

night and came out triumphant.”<sup>24</sup> In this sense, Japan’s phenomenal rise was not an isolated case but heralded the awakening of the East into its next cycle of vigor. Tagore praised Japan with such beautiful descriptions as “modern Japan has come out of the immemorial East like a lotus blossoming in an easy grace...[it] has also fearlessly claimed all the gifts of the modern age for herself.”<sup>25</sup> Nonetheless, he argued, “I, for myself, cannot believe that Japan has become what she is by imitating the West...The real truth is that science is not man’s nature, it is mere knowledge and training.”<sup>26</sup> Here Tagore attributed Japan’s modern achievements to a spiritual source traceable to a time immemorial. He not only defended Japan’s uniqueness against accusations of its imitation of the West, but extrapolated to the East in general this capability for self-transformation. For Tagore, the modern West and the traditional East stand for scientific knowledge and human nature respectively. Japan is indispensable to this framework for it showcased what Tagore spoke for and warned against at the same time: “Therefore your responsibility is all the greater, for in your voice Asia shall answer the questions that Europe has submitted to the conference of Man.”<sup>27</sup>

The last public lecture, “The Spirit of Japan,” delivered at Keio University in Tokyo on July 2, is clear-cut in structure. Tagore praised the Japanese spirit in the first part, and admonished it against over-Westernization in the second. The Indian poet was effusive in his commendations: “I have travelled in many countries and have met with men of all classes, but never in my travels did I feel the presence of the human so distinctly as in this land.”<sup>28</sup> What follows is an observation that captures the outer features—if not the “spirit” as Tagore claimed—of Japan:

You see a people, whose heart has come out and scattered itself in profusion in its commonest utensils of everyday life, in its social institutions, in its manners, that are carefully perfect, and in its dealings with things that are not only deft, but graceful in every

---

<sup>24</sup> Rabindranath Tagore, *The Message of India to Japan: A Lecture*, p.10.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p.11.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p.12.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p.17.

<sup>28</sup> Rabindranath Tagore, *The Spirit of Japan: A Lecture* (Tokyo: The Indo-Japanese Association, 1916), p.5.

movement.<sup>29</sup>

Tagore went further to assert that:

This opening of the heart to the soul of the world is not confined to a section of your privileged classes...but it belongs to all your men and women of all conditions.<sup>30</sup>

Moreover, he also depicted Japan as a “civilisation of human relationship[s]” maintained by filial duty, and the nation became “one family with your Emperor as its head.”<sup>31</sup> No more evidence is needed to demonstrate the kinship of these comments to *Nihonjinron*. Not only did Tagore stress the uniqueness of Japan, but all assumptions underlying *Nihonjinron* feature prominently here. A turning point came, however, immediately after Tagore’s praise: “And this had made me all the more apprehensive of the change...For the huge heterogeneity of the modern age, whose only common bond is usefulness, is nowhere so pitifully exposed against the dignity and hidden power of reticent beauty, as in Japan.”<sup>32</sup>

As mentioned above, the two Tokyo lectures constitute (with slight abridgement) “Nationalism in Japan,” one of the chapters of *Nationalism* that was published in 1917. It is thus reasonable to ask what “nationalism” meant for Tagore, and why it would do so much harm to the Japanese sensibility of beauty. An explanation can be culled from these lectures:

The genius of Europe has given her people the power of organisation, which has specially made itself manifest in politics and commerce and in coordinating scientific knowledge.<sup>33</sup>

Europe has a great tradition of humanity as Tagore fully acknowledged, but its inclination for organization with the help of modern scientific knowledge had made it narrowly focused on efficiency and profit-making, which resulted in

---

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p.6.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.9-10.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p.10.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p.11.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p.8.

nationalism and materialism.<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, “[t]he political civilisation...is based upon exclusiveness...It is always afraid of other races achieving eminence, naming it as a peril.”<sup>35</sup> As Tagore understood, Japan had tried hard to prove itself as aggressive as Western nations to win their respect,<sup>36</sup> but it also fell prey to their exclusiveness. The “Immigration Act of 1924” in the United States was a good example, towards which Tagore was to share the same indignation with the Japanese.

It is noted that the third speech was much more critical than the second because Tagore had spent some time experiencing Japan.<sup>37</sup> Nevertheless, as the two lectures were too close for extensive exploration of Japan in between, and there is an argumentative logic tying them together, perhaps it can be said that Tagore was more preoccupied with drawing Japan into his framework—with a view to the nuances this country could provide—than with understanding Japan’s history and culture for their own sake.

Critically, Tagore did not show much historical knowledge in his grand narrative. Neither the socio-political conditions of the emergence of nationalism in the West nor its practical impact on Japan receives satisfactory explication. Nonetheless, Tagore’s critique of nationalism changes the discourse from the categories of historical, social, and political studies into civilizational discourse, which Uma Das Gupta designates as “a cultural nationalism.”<sup>38</sup> Although Tagore was no less a strong supporter of national independence, his *Nationalism* is in essence an anti-nationalist discourse that aims to upset the paradigm of Western modernity and crown Asia or the East with supreme humanity. For Tagore, only with such a spiritual tradition could Japan, a newly modernized country, lead the world into an era of cultural fusion.<sup>39</sup> Here lies the crucial

---

<sup>34</sup> Tagore does not define “nationalism” in throughout his lectures in Japan, but he gave a definition for “nation” later in America as follows: “A nation, in the sense of the political and economic union of a people, is that aspect which a whole population assumes when organized for a mechanical purpose. Society as such has no ulterior purpose. It is an end in itself.” See Rabindranath Tagore, “Nationalism in the West,” in *Nationalism*, p.19.

<sup>35</sup> Rabindranath Tagore, *The Message of India to Japan: A Lecture*, p.21.

<sup>36</sup> Rabindranath Tagore, *The Spirit of Japan: A Lecture*, p.23.

<sup>37</sup> Rōyama Yoshirō 蠟山芳郎, “Tagōru to Nihon e no keikoku” タゴールと日本への警告 (Tagore and His Warning to Japan), in *Tagōru seitan hyakunensai kinen ronbunshū*, p.273.

<sup>38</sup> “Both in the context of India as well as in his reaction to the world situation, Rabindranath’s nationalism was humanitarian and cultural, never political.” See Uma Das Gupta, “A Cultural Nationalism,” in *The Visvabharati Quarterly*, Vol.48, Nos.1-4 (May 1982-April 1983), p.47.

<sup>39</sup> Harumi Befu has also developed a thesis on the relationship between nationalism and *Nihonjinron*. Of course, Tagore’s criticism of nationalism and its adoption in the general literature of *Nihonjinron* represent two opposite attitudes towards the same concept. See

difference between Tagore's *Nihonjinron* and the others of a pan-Asianist bent. In *The Ideal of the East*, while acclaiming the oneness of Asia, Okakura Tenshin highlights the privileged position of Japan as bridging the two hemispheres. Nonetheless, as history unfolded, "Asia is one" gradually developed into a jingoist slogan that took pride in Japan's modern vantage without showing genuine respect for cultural inheritance and social responsibility.

To conclude Tagore's view of nationalism, one must consider the overall structure of the book, as well as what is missing from it. The volume deals with nationalism in the West, in Japan, and in India, respectively. The lectures in Japan occurred the earliest, with the others delivered in America during the latter half of his 1916-1917 journey. Tagore showed unusual perception in pointing out the problems and opportunities that were facing India and America, but the chapter on Japan is the most theoretically complicated because of the pivotal position Japan occupied in the East-West dichotomy.<sup>40</sup> However, while Tagore said in Tokyo that "[t]he whole world waits to see what this great Eastern nation is going to do with the opportunities and responsibilities she has accepted from the hands of the modern time,"<sup>41</sup> he was not optimistic. Before sailing for Japan, Tagore expressed his concerns in a letter: "Japan is the youngest disciple of Europe—she has no soul—she is all science—and she has no sentiment to spare for other people than her own."<sup>42</sup> The three-month stay in Japan modified Tagore's view, but his suspicion persisted.

There is subtle evidence for this suspicion. In 1905, Tagore so rejoiced at the victory of Japan over Russia that he personally organized a parade in Kolkata, but he mentioned nothing about this victory in his 1916 lectures, probably to avoid instigating Japanese imperialist pride. Tagore revealed his disappointment at Japan during his 1924 visit to China, saying that "the East should not be humble when it had come into sudden good fortune."<sup>43</sup> Here Japan claimed no more the great tradition of the East, but became a

---

Harumi Befu, "Nationalism and *Nihonjinron*," in Harumi Befu ed., *Cultural Nationalism in East Asia: Representation and Identity* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1993), pp.107-135.

<sup>40</sup> For a later review of the lectures made in Japan and America during this trip, see Ramachandra Guha, "Introduction: Travelling with Tagore," in Rabindranath Tagore, *Nationalism*, pp.vii-lxviii. This 2009 *Penguin Modern Classics* version restores the lectures to their chronological order.

<sup>41</sup> Rabindranath Tagore, *The Message of India to Japan: A Lecture*, p.14.

<sup>42</sup> Cited from Krishna Dutta and Andrew Robinson, *Rabindranath Tagore: The Myriad-Minded Man*, p.200.

<sup>43</sup> Rabindranath Tagore, "Talks in China," in Mohit K. Ray ed. *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore, Volume IV: Essays*, p.752.

Westernized parvenu, whose expansionism in the inter-war period threatened not only China but also India.

Indeed, Tagore valued China over Japan in terms of cultural ties with India. When in China, he mentioned frequently the millennia-long cultural interaction between China and India, and alluded to the disadvantages shared by the two countries at the time to arouse sympathy from his audience.<sup>44</sup> Nevertheless, despite this strong affinity, China could not contribute to Tagore's grand narrative about an Asia that he hoped could modify Western modernity. He simply mentioned no historical influences of China on Japan in his Tokyo lectures, taking "Japaneseness" as naturally coming from an abstract East, which, through the example of Japan, proved itself capable of catching up with the modern West. Therefore, in Tagore's discourse, "Asia" was more theoretical than real, with tradition *versus* modernity being the core issue, the greatest barrier to a desired cultural unity being West-originated nationalism. In short, Asia took its conceptual shape by way of contrast to the West. This is the ideological ground of Tagore's *Nihonjinron*.

### 3.4 China, Japan, and Asia in the Eyes of Western Luminaries

In an essay commemorating Tagore's centenary in 1961, Takeuchi Yoshimi 竹内好 (1910-1977) states that "in Japan, generally speaking, Tagore was regarded as a poet from a ruined country; in China, he roused sympathy as a resistant poet by singing songs of national independence."<sup>45</sup> While this judgment is simplistic and will be examined in later chapters, Takeuchi was perceptive in pointing out that "if we do not take Tagore's relationship with China into consideration, we cannot fully understand his relationship with Japan."<sup>46</sup> This understanding derived from Takeuchi's long-standing interest in modern Japanese and Chinese intellectual histories. Besides, he was also aware that a fuller perspective should include other foreign figures who were

---

<sup>44</sup> "We in India are a defeated race...we do not know how to help or to injure you materially. But, fortunately we can meet you as your guests, your brothers and your friends." *Ibid.*, p.746.

<sup>45</sup> Takeuchi Yoshimi, "Tagōru to Chūgoku" タゴールと中国 (Tagore and China), in *Takeuchi Yoshimi zenshū* 竹内好全集 (Complete Works of Takeuchi Yoshimi) (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1981), Vol.5, p.220.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

influential in both countries, such as Dewey and Russell.<sup>47</sup>

However, as will be demonstrated, this comparison renders the idea of Asia problematic. While they all considered China an Asian country, it is a totally different issue when Japan was taken into consideration. The fortunes of the two countries in the modern world were so different that one might wonder if the geographical designation of Asia was appropriate for accommodating such contrasting historical experiences. Given the immensity of Asia, Tagore consciously divided it into eastern and western parts,<sup>48</sup> and claimed that in the past “the whole of eastern Asia from Burma to Japan was united with India in the closest tie of friendship.”<sup>49</sup> What Tagore was referring to was the influence of Buddhism. This cultural bond, despite its historicity, does not seem to have dovetailed with the realpolitik of the time, as observed by Dewey and Russell.

John Dewey went to China in response to invitations made by many of his former students. He was in the country from May 1919 to July 1921. During this period and slightly afterwards, he wrote several essays and published them as *China, Japan, and the U.S.A.* at the end of 1921. The booklet bears a subtitle, *Present-day Conditions in the Far East and Their Bearing on the Washington Conference*, aiming to illustrate the complicated international relationships at the time. Dewey’s depiction of the political status quo of China soon after WWI is beyond the scope of this chapter, but suffice it to say that his treatment of the network of international powers provides a more realistic portrait than Tagore’s great expectation of the rebirth of Asia. As Dewey headed for China by way of Japan (actually he received the invitation from his Chinese students in Japan), he made a comparison “on the two sides of the Eastern Seas” and concluded:

It is three days’ easy journey from Japan to China. It is doubtful whether anywhere in the world another journey of the same length brings with it such a complete change of political temper and belief...The difference...concerns the ideas, beliefs and alleged information current about one and the same fact: the status of Japan

---

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.* In a famous 1960 lecture, Takeuchi discussed Dewey’s view of modernization of both Japan and China, with passing reference to Russell’s and Tagore’s views. As a pioneer of such comparative work, he expected that detailed comparisons would appear in the future. See Takeuchi Yoshimi, “Hōhō toshite no Ajia” 方法としてのアジア (Asia as a Method), in *ibid.*, pp.90-115.

<sup>48</sup> See Feng Youlan, “Yu Indu Taiguer tanhua: dongxiwenming zhi bijiaoguan,” in *Sansongtang quanji*, Vol.11, p.4.

<sup>49</sup> Rabindranath Tagore, *The Message of India to Japan: A Lecture*, p.17.



in the international world and especially its attitude toward China.<sup>50</sup>

What follows is a somewhat humorous description of the political tensions pervading China and Japan, which found expression through the very different temperaments of the two countries: the Chinese were talkative and straightforward, and were unanimous in “the feeling of...the domination of Chinese politics and industry by Japan with a view to its final absorption.”<sup>51</sup> To the contrary, in Japan, “the land of reserves and reticences,” Dewey found there “a subtle nervous tension in the atmosphere as of a country on the verge of change but not knowing where the change will take it.”<sup>52</sup> Indeed, Tagore sensed in Japan a similar uncertainty in 1916 and interpreted it as a tension between traditional Asian ideals and modern European utility. Dewey focused instead on the economic and political problems that were facing Japan, both domestically and internationally. The second chapter of the book contrasts the Japanese and German treatments of Shandong Province. While Germany took possession only of the port city of Qingdao and let the Chinese people lead their daily lives unhindered, Japan not only took over Germany’s previous rights but also monopolized Shandong’s economy and militarized virtually the entire province.<sup>53</sup> Here he touched upon the issue of the Twenty-One Demands upon China in 1915, by which Japan attempted to subsume the northern part of China under its control. Such Japanese ambitions produced an unexpected result, however.

But Asia has come to consciousness, and her consciousness of herself will soon be such a massive and persistent thing that it will force itself upon the reluctant consciousness of the west, and lie heavily upon its conscience. And for this fact, China and the western world are indebted to Japan.<sup>54</sup>

In Dewey’s view, Japan’s aggression stimulated Asia into awakening, a

---

<sup>50</sup> John Dewey, *China, Japan and the U.S.A: Present-day Conditions in the Far East and Their Bearing on the Washington Conference* (New York: Republic Publishing Co., Inc., 1921), p.3. “On Two Sides of the Eastern Seas” is the title of the first chapter.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.3-4.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.9-12.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p.17.

truth that was foisted on the West. But we have to ask: what did Asia signify for Dewey?

For continental Asia is, for practical purposes, India and China, representing two of the oldest civilizations of the globe...Asia is really here after all. It is not simply a symbol in western algebraic balances of trade. And in the future, so to speak, it is going to be even more here, with its awakened national consciousness of about half the population of the whole globe.<sup>55</sup>

Dewey did not explain what he meant by “for practical purposes.” Nevertheless, from his description, “continental Asia” seems to entail a set of long-standing conditions of civilization totally different from those of the modern West, thus excluding Japan for reasons that were more complicated than simply geographical or political. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Japan constituted a European-like power that sought to maximize profits in China, or continental Asia. Under the circumstances, from Dewey’s point of view, the only force to preserve the integrity of Asia—territorially and economically—was America. He directed many of his arguments in *China, Japan and the U.S.A.* to a single prospect: the important role that America was to assume at the Washington Conference. Not only must the “open door policy” to China be insisted upon, but “the door [should] be opened to light, to knowledge and understanding.”<sup>56</sup> What really mattered was “the need of China and the Orient in general for freer and fuller communications with the rest of the world.”<sup>57</sup> Dewey ended his book with the following caution:

To shirk this responsibility on the alleged ground that economic imperialism and organized greed will surely bring the Conference to failure is supine and snobbish. It is one of the factors that may lead the United States to take the wrong course in the parting of the ways.<sup>58</sup>

Clearly, Dewey’s concern about China was no less intense than that of

---

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p.16.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p.64.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

Tagore. They criticized Western civilization in similar language such as “economic imperialism” and “organized greed,” and they were waiting for the revival of Asia, whether in political or cultural terms. Nonetheless, we observe in Tagore, as an Asian, a desire to see Asia stand on its own feet, which accounts for the significance he attached to Japan. Dewey, by contrast, wanted to see Asia rise under the auspices of America.

Now let’s turn to Bertrand Russell for a European perspective of Asia in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Russell was also invited to visit China during this era. He arrived in China in October 1920 and left Beijing on the same day as Dewey in July, 1921. On the way back to England he made a brief visit to Japan. Shortly after returning home, he published *The Problems of China* in 1922, which is a work of comparative civilizations. Russell understood that the problems of China were significant on account of their vast scale:

In fact, however, all the world will be vitally affected by the development of Chinese affairs, which may well prove a decisive factor, for good or evil, during the next two centuries.<sup>59</sup>

On a deeper level, however, it seems that Russell expected China to provide an alternative civilizational paradigm to the modern West, against parts of which he nursed strong resentment. He valued China highly for the pervasiveness of its folk art, intuitive happiness, and human relations. These qualities, claimed Russell, had long disappeared in the modern West, which mostly gained its property “by widespread oppression and exploitation.”<sup>60</sup> Of course, China had its own cultural predicaments, and Russell had witnessed there the struggle between pro-Westernization forces and the traditionalists. But he believed that China would be more capable of achieving an organic growth from its own tradition while assimilating what was good from the West if time permitted, an expectation that Tagore placed on Japan.

Interestingly, Russell’s perception of Japan is also tinged with *Nihonjinron*. However, unlike Tagore, this uniqueness of Japan was for Russell a source of misgivings, and did not have inherent potential to mitigate its borrowed vices:

---

<sup>59</sup> Bertrand Russell, *The Problems of China*, p.9.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p.12.

For sociology, for social psychology, and for political theory, Japan is an extraordinarily interesting country. The synthesis of East and West which has been effected is of a most peculiar kind. There is far more of the East than appears on the surface; but there is everything of the West that tends to national efficiency.<sup>61</sup>

This particularity of Japan, for Russell, derived from Japan's rather confused self-identity, in terms of its geographical and historical relations to mainland Asia:

From some points of view, Asia, including Russia, may be regarded as a unity; but from this unity Japan must be excluded. Russia, China, and India...could be self-subsistent economically...Japan, like Great Britain, must depend upon commerce for power and prosperity. As yet, Japan has not developed the Liberal mentality appropriate to a commercial nation, and is still bent upon Asiatic conquest and military prowess.<sup>62</sup>

Here we see a similarity between Russell and Dewey. For them, Asia was basically "continental Asia," whose pillars were China and India. Whether Russia was included or not, Japan did not seem compatible with this unity. Russell pointed out that the vast plains of China, India, and Russia could afford them independence of commerce and indifference to progress. This is the economic as well as cultural foundation of the history of Asia. Japan, notwithstanding its geographical proximity, was characterized by two incompatible ambitions: "On the one hand, they wish to pose as the champions of Asia against the oppression of the white man; on the other hand, they wish to be admitted to equality by the white Powers."<sup>63</sup> Although Tagore was conscious of the dilemma, he could not afford this division between continental Asia and Japan, at least at the beginning of his international career, because it would undermine his ideal of an Asia that was very much in need of modern transformation that Japan had achieved.

---

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, p.98.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p.119.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p.120.

Both Dewey and Russell visited China and Japan during the inter-war period. They both showed admiration for Chinese tradition and repugnance toward the aggression of modern Japan.<sup>64</sup> They were also both in a position to predict the future of the Far East after WWI. Their views differ on the Washington Conference. While Dewey expected America to take a moral stance, Russell, whose book was written after the conference, regarded America as nothing more than a great power that supported China on the Shandong problem mainly out of political considerations.<sup>65</sup> Nevertheless, when it came to Asia, what figured in their minds was China in terms of its fundamental difference with the West. On the contrary, “modern Japan must count as a Western product.”<sup>66</sup>

### 3.5 Japan in Asia: An Intellectual Tension

This chapter contextualizes Tagore’s view of Japan into the discursive space of *Nihonjinron*. Through his comments, Tagore was actually addressing the unbalanced power structure of the modern world. Although Tagore did not claim any authority on the issue of Japan, he involved himself in modern Japanese intellectual history by participating in the country’s efforts of defining “Japaneseness”.

Minami Hiroshi claimed, “There are no other peoples comparable to the Japanese in terms of the fondness for defining their national character.”<sup>67</sup> Doubtlessly, such an inclination is not a modern product, as Edwin Reischauer (1910-1990), the great American Japanologist and former ambassador to Japan, attested:

Early in their history the Japanese developed the habit of cataloguing foreign influences and contrasting them with “native” characteristics.

---

<sup>64</sup> These, of course, are their opinions during the inter-war period. Furthermore, personal feelings expressed in private correspondences and outlooks on civilization published in book forms do not necessarily coincide. For an introduction to Dewey’s relationship with Japan, see Tsurumi Shunsuke 鶴見俊輔, *Dyūi デューイ* (Dewey) (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1984), pp.81-95; for an introduction to Russell’s relationship with Japan, see Ichii Saburō 市井三郎, *Rasseru ラッセル* (Russell) (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1980), particularly pp.349-354.

<sup>65</sup> We can find an interesting comment in Russell’s book: “American public opinion is in favour of peace, and at the same time profoundly persuaded that America is wise and virtuous while all other Powers are foolish and wicked.” *Ibid.*, p.159.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p.14.

<sup>67</sup> Minami Hiroshi, *Nihonjinron: Meiji kara konnichi made*, p.v.

One result has been a frequent emphasis in Japanese history on primitive and therefore supposedly native Japanese traits.<sup>68</sup>

Despite the early roots of this tendency of defining the “national character,” the modern period, or the time since the Meiji era from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, witnessed the proliferation of *Nihonjinron* with Japan’s growing necessity for self-definition in a fiercely competitive world. What Tagore appealed to was a Japan seeking to secure its identity and profits by growing imperialistic; both a unified Asia against the West and the idea of “surpassing modernity” were of great interest to lecturer and audience; only the purposes to stress the uniqueness and mission of Japan were opposite.

As Takeuchi Yoshimi noted, one cannot separate Tagore’s Japanese experiences from his Chinese experiences. Although he did not explain why, the reason is simple: Japan and China stood for successful modernization and great tradition respectively, and were indispensable to the revival of Asia along with Tagore’s native India. This issue of pan-Asianism constituted one of Takeuchi’s intellectual concerns throughout his scholarly career. However, even though Tagore showed stronger affinity toward China, it was the tremendous achievements of modern Japan that received most articulation in his pan-Asian discourse. In contrast, for Western intellectuals such as Dewey and Russell, the issue of a unified Asia did not weigh heavily and they were comfortable with an idea of Asia without Japan.

Compared with Dewey and Russell, Tagore focused less on historical specifics and political conditions in Japan and China, which become mere background for his overarching civilizational discourse. It is this cultural orientation that made him praise the Meiji Restoration as “the most wonderful revolution that the world has ever seen.”<sup>69</sup> Interestingly, for another veritable “revolution” that overturned China’s two-millennia long imperial system, that is, the 1911 revolution, Tagore gave it not even a passing mention, whether in Japan in 1916 or in China in 1924.<sup>70</sup> Apparently, this was not ignorance but choice, as Tagore had long abandoned the option of overthrowing a government

---

<sup>68</sup> Edwin Reischauer, “Early Japan: The Absorption of Chinese Civilization,” in John Fairbank, Edwin Reischauer, Albert Craig, eds., *East Asia: Tradition and Transformation, Revised Edition* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1989), p.325.

<sup>69</sup> Rabindranath Tagore, *The Message of India to Japan: A Lecture*, p.18.

<sup>70</sup> Cf. Rabindranath Tagore, *Talks in China*, in Mohit K. Ray ed., *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore*, Volume IV: Essays, pp.741-805

through violence. In China, he paid a visit to the former emperor Puyi 溥儀 (1906-1967) in the Forbidden City and showed much appreciation for the architecture and gardening of traditional China, an action much criticized by progressive-minded Chinese intellectuals at the time.<sup>71</sup>

In sharp contrast to Tagore's sentimental culturalism, Russell, who was apparently more read than Tagore in Japanese and Chinese histories, had much to say about the neo-traditionalist and centralist nature of the Meiji Restoration in his *The Problems of China*.<sup>72</sup> Dewey also expressed his suspicion of Japan straightforwardly: "[Japan] has modern military weapons, a newly developed commerce, and efficient transportation; but she still has not changed her old concepts, her old morals, her old habits. As a result of this failure, Japan is paying the price both of the old civilization and of the new, without being able to reap a full measure of profit from either."<sup>73</sup>

Tagore's cultural-mindedness is all the more conspicuous in comparison with Sun Yat-sen 孫逸仙 (1866-1925), the father of modern China. Sun invited Tagore to Guangzhou during the latter's 1924 trip. Although the visit could not be scheduled into Tagore's itinerary, it is reasonable to assume that Sun was well informed of the content of Tagore's lectures in China. At the end of the same year, Sun visited Japan and gave a famous speech in Kobe on "Great Asianism." Like Tagore, he tried to address the issue in cultural terms:

What kind of problem is it for the "Great Asianism" we are speaking of?  
In brief, it is a cultural problem, a problem of comparison and conflict  
between Eastern and Western cultures.<sup>74</sup>

Sun defined "Great Asianism" as a "cultural problem," which, on the part of Eastern cultures, was to commit Japan and China to an Asian unity. As to Europe, Sun emphasized that only military means were feasible to reclaim the

---

<sup>71</sup> See Chen Duxiu, "Taigeer shi yige sheme dongxi" 太戈爾是一個什麼東西！(What is Tagore!), in Ren Jianshu et al. eds., *Chen Duxiu zhuzuoxuan*, Vol.2, p.683.

<sup>72</sup> See Bertrand Russell, *The Problems of China*. Chapter 5, "Japan before the Restoration," pp.86-96; Chapter 6, "Modern Japan," pp.97-116.

<sup>73</sup> John Dewey, Robert W. Clopton and Tsuin-chen Ou trs. eds., *Lectures in China, 1919-1920* (Honolulu: UP of Hawaii, 1973), p.238.

<sup>74</sup> Sun Yat-sen, "Dui Shenhu shangyiehu yisuo deng tuanti de yanshuo" 對神戶商業會議所等團體的演說 (Lecture to the Kobe Commercial Association), in *Sun Zhongshan quanji*, Vol.11, p.407.

rights of Asian countries.<sup>75</sup> As Dewey noted, Sun remained a revolutionist type of nationalist throughout.<sup>76</sup> He reminded his Japanese audiences of the victory over Russia in 1905 and remembered how the Westerners were shocked by Russia's defeat. The anxiety of the "yellow peril" had risen in Europe again as Tagore also observed. The difference lies in that Tagore was too worried about the militarization of Japan to mention this victory and only proposed a self-defensive armed force.<sup>77</sup> The advice fell on deaf ears at the time. However, after World War II, Tagore's cordial warnings have been remembered and frequently cited by many Japanese.

A final note. As suggested previously, *Nihonjinron* and pan-Asianism are two intertwined discourses from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Despite changes of historical contexts, Sugimoto Yoshio critically points out that the propagation of "Asian values" today is "almost a pan-Asian version of *Nihonjinron*."<sup>78</sup> Both discourses of Asianess and Japaneseness assume a Western other and are premised on considerable economic and political maturity. Such an ideology already took root when Japan tried to assert its entitlement in the world a century ago.

---

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, p.408.

<sup>76</sup> John Dewey, *China, Japan and the U.S.A: Present-day Conditions in the Far East and Their Bearing on the Washington Conference*, p.41.

<sup>77</sup> Rabindranath Tagore, *The Spirit of Japan: A Lecture*, pp.14-15.

<sup>78</sup> Sugimoto Yoshio, *An Introduction to Japanese Society, Third Edition*, p.20.



## 4. Changing Perspectives on Tagore in Modern Japanese Intellectual History

### 4.1 Reception of Tagore in Japan

In 2011, many countries celebrated the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore. Japan was no exception. Historically, as Tagore's international career as an interpreter of Eastern civilization overlapped Japan's rise to a great power in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, their mutual depictions have left clear records on both sides of the interaction. While I have examined Tagore's characterization of Japan in the context of *Nihonjinron*,<sup>1</sup> the purpose of this chapter is to trace the vicissitudes of Tagore's reputation in Japan from the early 1910s to the present, thus revealing the major trends in modern Japanese intellectual history through the case of Tagore.

Tagore was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1913. This honor brought him great opportunities to travel frequently and exchange ideas with intellectuals worldwide. Tagore took his first long-term overseas tour in 1916 after becoming an international figure when he stayed in Japan for three months en route to the United States. Before this visit, a Tagore fever had spread among the Japanese who, as one of the peoples of Asia, were strongly sympathetic to the first non-European Nobel laureate. Nevertheless, this tour marked a watershed for Japanese attitudes towards Tagore, whose "Asian project" was of a humanistic and spiritual nature, and as such, was in contradiction to Japan's national interests as well as to its modern intellectual direction. Although Tagore showed great appreciation for the Japanese sense of beauty and refined manners, he was disturbed by the overwhelming Westernization of Japan, and his untimely warnings alienated many of his former admirers.

Takeuchi Yoshimi once commented: "How was Tagore generally treated in Japan? He was regarded as a poet from India, singing an elegy for a ruined country."<sup>2</sup> This was an unfriendly but logical consequence of Tagore's criticism of Japan's modern achievements. As Takeuchi received his formal education

---

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter 3.

<sup>2</sup> Takeuchi Yoshimi, "Hōhō toshite no Ajia", in *Takeuchi Yoshimi zenshū*, Vol.5, p.105.

during the inter-war period, it can be said that his impression was to a great extent shared by many Japanese at the time, when the first craze for Tagore in Japan had already faded. In another essay that introduces a memorial volume published in celebration of Tagore's centenary in 1961, Takeuchi says that "glancing through the list of relevant documents at the end of the volume, which also includes the titles of news coverage on Tagore, it is interesting to trace how Japanese attitudes towards Tagore changed."<sup>3</sup> As a perceptive intellectual historian, Takeuchi viewed this transformation against the social background of Japan in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and asserted: "That is, roughly speaking, the change from *Taishō kyōyōshugi* [大正教養主義; i.e. a form of culturalism prevalent during the 1910s and early 1920s] to the invasion of China was paradoxically reflected by the mirror called Tagore."<sup>4</sup>

Although Takeuchi was not a Tagore scholar, his interest in the Indian poet was nothing less than natural, as the latter was eager to criticize West-centric nationalism and modernity and to call for Japan and China to form an Asian unity with India. These are all topics that Takeuchi frequently revisited throughout his scholarly career. Given this like-mindedness, Takeuchi observed that while Tagore's inheritance from both the Indian classics and Western humanism had long been noted in Japan, reevaluations of Tagore around 1961 showed signs of increasing emphasis on his opinion of "Asian nationalism," which Takeuchi expected would draw more and more attention from Japanese scholars.<sup>5</sup>

This chapter places Takeuchi Yoshimi's comments in a historical context. Both the relevance and limitations of his comments will become clear as the argument unfolds. Taking a longer view of the fluctuations of Tagore's reputation in Japan in the past hundred years, three different stages can be discerned: the years before Tagore's death in 1941, the years around Tagore's centenary in 1961, and the current period from the 1980s that reached a climax in 2011, namely, Tagore's 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The criteria for this periodization will be clarified in each of the following sections, and the analyses are aimed to

---

<sup>3</sup> Takeuchi Yoshimi, "Tagōru kinenkai hen *Tagōru hoka*" タゴール記念会編『タゴール』他 (*Tagore* Edited by the Tagore Memorial Association and Others), in *ibid.*, p.219. For the list, see "Nihon ni okeru Tagōru bunken mokuroku" 日本におけるタゴール文献目録 (Reference Materials on Tagore Issued in Japan) (sic.), in *Tagōru kinenkai* ed., *Tagōru seitan hyakunensai kinen ronbunshū*, pp.12-37 (from the back).

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

demonstrate how Tagore's public images in Japan have been closely connected to Japan's changing self-identity in the modern world.

#### 4.2 First Stage: The Years before 1941

Tagore's interaction with Japanese intellectuals started in 1901 when Okakura Kakuzō made a one-year sojourn to India, where he became acquainted with the Tagore family and established a relationship between Bengali and Japanese artists. "This was where the reformation of Japanese art and the Bengal Renaissance intersected, which was an event of extreme significance in the history of interaction between Japan and India in the modern era."<sup>6</sup>

Although the Tagore family and Rabindranath Tagore himself constituted an integral part of the cultural life in Bengal from the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, his fame was restricted to Bengali-speaking regions before the 1913 Nobel Prize. After the event, however, Tagore's profile increased dramatically all over the world. In Japan, the first Tagore-related report was also on his earning of the Nobel Prize at the end of 1913.<sup>7</sup> Both introductory and scholarly works began to multiply from 1914, which culminated with Tagore's visit to Japan in 1916. As mentioned above, Tagore took on the mission of appealing to Japan for a humanistic Asian union, and thus warned Japan against Westernization. The following statement epitomizes Tagore's anxiety about Japan's modernization:

I am quite sure that there are men in your country who are not in sympathy with your inherited ideals...They are loud in their boast that they have modernised Japan. While I agree with them so far as to say that the spirit of the race should harmonise with the time, I must warn them that...[t]rue modernism is freedom of mind, not slavery of taste. It is independence of thought and action, not tutelage under European schoolmasters.<sup>8</sup>

This admonition was not well received by the Japanese and their enthusiasm about Tagore subsequently began to recede. Indeed, there were

---

<sup>6</sup> Azuma Kazuo 我妻和男, *Tagōru* タゴール (Tagore) (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1981), p.5.

<sup>7</sup> "Indo shijin no eiyo," in *Yomiuri shinbun* on November 16, 1913.

<sup>8</sup> Rabindranath Tagore, *Nationalism*, pp.93-94.

fewer than three years between the “Tagore boom” and “Tagore bashing” in Japan,<sup>9</sup> but this period was significant in two respects in terms of Tagore studies. Firstly, although there have been recurrent reviews of Tagore in Japanese academia, neither their number nor the intensity of interest is comparable to the early 1910s. Secondly, this interaction and concomitant contradiction between the Indian poet and the Japanese has since constituted the core concern of such issues as “Tagore and Japan,” with his later visits in 1924 and 1929 receiving less attention. As detailed analyses of this encounter are abundant, this section focuses on Tagore’s relationship with the intellectual trend in Japan from the 1910s to the 1940s. In doing so, some rarely cited materials will be referenced to sketch this history.

Concerning the change in attitude towards Tagore in Japan in 1916, Charles Freer Andrews (1871-1940), one of Tagore’s English friends who accompanied the poet on this trip, has left us first-hand testimony:

They received him with enthusiasm at first, as one who had brought honour to Asia. But when he spoke out strongly against the militant imperialism which he saw on every side in Japan and set forward in contrast to his own ideal picture of the true meeting of East and West, with its vista of world brotherhood, the hint went abroad that such “pacifist” teaching was a danger in wartime, and that the Indian Poet represented a defeated nation. Therefore, almost as rapidly as the enthusiasm had arisen, it subsided. In the end, he was almost isolated, and the object for which he had come to the Far East remained unfulfilled.<sup>10</sup>

As a foreign visitor who did not know Japanese, Andrews must have based his conclusions on accounts conveyed by interpreters about Tagore and

---

<sup>9</sup> The terms “Tagore boom” and “Tagore bashing” are frequently used in Nakajima Takeshi 中島岳志, “Tagōru, awareru: Taishō shoki no ‘Tagōru netsu’ to shorainichi o megutte” タゴール、現る—大正初期の「タゴール熱」と初来日を巡って (The first visit to Japan of Tagore, R.: Concerning the Cult of Tagore Early in the Taisho Period and His Visit to Japan) (sic.), in *Ōkurayama ronshū* 大倉山論集 (Bulletin of Ōkura Institute for the Study of Spiritual Culture), No.55 (March, 2009) (Yokoyama: Ōkura Institute for the Study of Spiritual Culture), pp.221-261.

<sup>10</sup> Charles Freer Andrews, introductory note to Rabindranath Tagore, *Letters to a Friend*, in Mohit K. Ray ed., *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore, Volume VI: Essays, Lectures, Addresses*, p.317.

comments on him published in English newspapers. But there were factors more profound than what Andrews could grasp.

Before Tagore was regarded as a poet from a defeated nation, there had been philosophical discussions on Tagore's thought as well as critiques of the uncritical admiration for Tagore in Japan. In fact, what Takeuchi Yoshimi noted as a considerable number of studies on Tagore's relationship with both Indian and Western cultures mostly appeared during this period. For example, the magazine *Rikugō zasshi* designated its May, 1915 issue as a "Special Number for Tagore and India."<sup>11</sup> Monographs such as *Tagore and the Realization of Life*, *Tagore: Life of a Saint*, *The Philosophy of Tagore*, *Tagore's Thought and Religion* were also published in 1915.<sup>12</sup> In the same year, a collection of essays entitled *Views of Tagore Held by Notable Figures* also came out, which includes critical evaluations of Tagore's literature, philosophy, and popularity in Japan.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, prior to Tagore's involvement in ideological disputation, we see that "a number of acknowledged leaders in their respective fields did speak out, and the very diversity of their opinions is an index of the healthy state of intellectual life in this period of Japan's modern history."<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, Japanese scholars were so eager for imported ideas that "[t]ension among the many traditions penetrating from abroad was if anything more serious than the concurrent tension between foreign and indigenous traditions."<sup>15</sup> On the other hand, criticisms from thinkers such as Tanaka Ōdō 田中王堂 (1868-1932) aimed to put a brake to the overheated reception of Tagore outside academia, a phenomenon he regarded as belonging to a larger trend of pursuing foreign thought without well digesting it.<sup>16</sup>

The "Tagore boom" arose in 1915 when it was rumored that Tagore was to visit Japan. Although this plan was abandoned and enthusiasm cooled for a

---

<sup>11</sup> *Rikugō zasshi* 六合雑誌, No.412 (May, 1915).

<sup>12</sup> Nakazawa Rinsen 中澤臨川, *Tagōru to sei no jitsugen* タゴールと生の実現 (Tagore and the Realization of Life) (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1915); Yoshida Genjirō 吉田絃二郎, *Tagōru seisha no seikatsu* タゴール聖者の生活 (Tagore: Life of a Saint) (Tokyo: Tengendō Shobō, 1915); Saiki Sensui 斎木仙酔, *Tagōru no tetsugaku* タゴールの哲学 (The Philosophy of Tagore) (Tokyo: Tōadō Shobō, 1915); Ebe Ōson 江部鴨村, *Tagōru no shisō oyobi shūkyō* タゴールの思想及宗教 (Tagore's Thought and Religion) (Tokyo: Jitsugetsusha, 1915).

<sup>13</sup> Kiyosawa Iwao 清澤巖, ed., *Meishi no Tagōru kan* 名士のタゴール観 (Views of Tagore Held by Notable Figures) (Tokyo: Jyōnansha, 1915).

<sup>14</sup> Stephen Hay, *Asian Ideas of East and West: Tagore and His Critics in Japan, China, and India*, p.118.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p.123.

<sup>16</sup> Tanaka Ōdō, "Tagōru ryūkō ni tsuite no ichikansatsu" タゴール流行に就ての一観察 (An Observation on the Tagore Fashion), in Kiyosawa Iwao, ed., *Meishi no Tagōru kan*, pp.1-18.

while, it was rekindled when an itinerary was confirmed and then realized at the end of May, 1916. The extraordinary welcome accorded to Tagore crystallized into a single volume, *St. Tagore*, which incorporates some of Tagore's speeches, comments on him by Japanese authors, and a detailed itinerary of the first fortnight of his trip.<sup>17</sup> Since the volume was prepared in June and published in early July as a tribute to Tagore, it emphasized the most lustrous side of the visit, leaving Tagore's later isolation unrecorded. The *Rikugō zasshi*, which dedicated an issue to Tagore and India the previous year, launched a special issue on Tagore again in July, 1916, but this time some of the articles were more critical in tone, in response to Tagore's deflating comments on Japan's modernization. While Inoue Tetsujirō 井上哲次郎 (1856-1944), one of Japan's leading philosophers at the time, still structured his criticism in dialectical terms,<sup>18</sup> Tanimoto Tomeri 谷本富 (1867-1946) dismissed Tagore as a mere Indian poet whose advice was not applicable to Japan, which was seeking to catch up with Western powers:

It is hard to imagine that listening to Tagore will contribute to the flourishing of very many aspects of our empire...Although it is very good to often belittle imitation and elevate imagination, has our country been able actually to create [anything] from ancient times? As the optimal policy for the future increase in our country's power, we must learn not just physically, but metaphysically, how to have the strength of advanced civilized countries.<sup>19</sup>

Here a common misunderstanding must be pointed out. Tagore, even in his lectures in Japan that proposed a spiritual Eastern civilization, had never shown any disrespect for science. On the contrary, he praised science

---

<sup>17</sup> Kyōiku gakujyutsu kenkyūkai 教育学会研究会 (Association for Education and Academic Research), ed., *Sei Tagōru* 聖タゴール (St. Tagore) (Tokyo: Dōbunkan, 1915).

<sup>18</sup> "It goes without saying that science is not all-powerful and the existence of other intellectuals than scientists is necessary...however, to refuse science rashly will not bring any benefits... In some respects Tagore's words are not without insight. But he always expresses himself in the tone of a defeated India. Such a tone is inevitable considering India's religious philosophy." See Inoue Tetsujirō, "Tagōru shi no kōen ni tsuite" タゴール氏の講演に就て (On Tagore's Lectures), in *Rikugō zasshi*, No.426 (July, 1916), p.28. The English title is given.

<sup>19</sup> Tanimoto Tomeri, "Tagōru wa shijin nomi Indojin nomi" タゴールは詩人のみ印度人のみ (Tagore is Nothing but a Poet and an Indian), in *ibid.*, p.36. Interestingly, the title of this article is omitted in the English table of contents.

enthusiastically and regarded it as a noble way to seek truth. What he warned against was utilitarian application of science for profit-seeking and empire-building. This nuance, nevertheless, failed to appeal to most of his Japanese audience, whether academic circles or other communities, who simply dismissed his message as being conservative, or even obstinate.<sup>20</sup>

It has been noted that, from the very beginning, Tagore was considered by the Japanese to be more of a thinker than a poet. Several factors accounted for this unbalanced image, including reading of Tagore's poems through multiple translations, political struggles in both Japan and India, and the attention given to Tagore in Japan by Buddhist monks and politicians.<sup>21</sup> Together with Tagore's own intention to dissuade Japan from over-Westernization, all these factors became an obstacle to genuine appreciation for Tagore's poetic subtlety. Indeed, opinions on Tagore's literature were not uncommon in the 1910s, but were mostly expressed by scholars rather than by literary figures. In a 1915 volume introducing modern foreign thinkers, the authors even claim that Tagore was awarded the Nobel Prize because of his philosophical sermons, *The Realization of Life*, while overlooking his literary achievements.<sup>22</sup> This emphasis on Tagore's thought was diversified, as mentioned above, but became more and more politically oriented soon after Tagore criticized Japan's modernization. Amid the voices against Tagore, Ōkawa Shūmei constituted an interesting exception. As one of the representative nationalistic pan-Asianists in early twentieth-century Japan, Ōkawa lamented that the vigor of the Japanese nation, which had reached its zenith in the Meiji era (1868-1912), was declining during the reign of the Taishō Emperor (1912-1926); if the stupor continued, Japan would not be the strongest country in Asia or in the world.<sup>23</sup> To encourage his

---

<sup>20</sup> Takahashi Gorō 高橋五郎, "Tagōru no gangu" タゴールの頑愚 (The Obstinacy of Tagore), in *Jinsei tetsugaku chawa* 人生哲学茶話 (Tea Talks on Life Philosophy) (Tokyo: Daitōkaku, 1918), pp.130-134.

<sup>21</sup> Niwa Kyōko 丹羽京子, "Tagōru to Nihon" タゴールと日本 (Tagore and Japan), in *Tagōru chosakushū, bekkantō: Tagōru kenkyū* タゴール著作集・別巻—タゴール研究 (Collected Works of Tagore, Supplementary Volume: Tagore Studies) (Tokyo: Daisan Bunmeisha, 1993), pp.355-358.

<sup>22</sup> Nakazawa Rinsen, Ikuta Chōkō 生田長江 eds., *Kindai shisō jyūrokkō* 近代思想十六講 (Sixteen Talks on Modern Thought) (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1915), p.470. In another book that bears a parallel title and was issued by the same publisher, Tagore is also discussed in a philosophical vein. See Ikuta Chōkō et al., *Kindai bungei jyunikō* 近代文芸十二講 (Twelve Talks on Modern Literature and the Arts) (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1921), pp.105-115.

<sup>23</sup> Ōkawa Shūmei, *Indo ni okeru kokumiteki undō no genjō oyobi sono yurai* 印度に於ける国民的運動の現状及び其の由来 (The Current State and Origin of Indian National Movement), in *Ōkawa Shūmei zenshū: daikan* 大川周明全集・第二巻 (Complete Works of Ōkawa Shūmei, Volume 2), p.535.

fellow Japanese, Ōkawa drew on Tagore's message and in 1916 made the following comment:

As an Asian poet laureate and a loyal servant to India, Tagore's view of the position and mission of Japan in Asia during his brief stay here was to the point. He was welcomed as a victorious general when he came, but was sent away like a stranger when he left. Such a change of attitude probably did not make him happy. However, it is fortunate that his judgment was not distorted by emotion. He fearlessly told a correspondent of the *Manchester Guardian* that Japan is the indisputable leader of Asia.<sup>24</sup>

In addition to Ōkawa, another influential Japanese thinker who favored Tagore's proposal of Eastern civilization was Kita Reikichi 北吟吉 (1885-1961), who wrote in a 1915 article that Tagore's being awarded the Nobel Prize was a sign of the resurrection of Eastern thought; Japan must take this opportunity to reflect on its attitude towards Western civilization, so that the ideal of "Japanese spirit with Western arts" (和魂洋才) could be realized in the future.<sup>25</sup> After mid-1916, Kita Reikichi also turned critical towards Tagore's idealistic political view, although he still took his thought seriously.<sup>26</sup> Obviously, both Westernizers and traditionalists tended to read Tagore in a highly political and nationalistic context. In most cases, the Japanese did not regard Tagore as first and foremost a poet. However, once they found his message unpleasant, he was relegated to the status of being a poet from a ruined country.

Besides the 1916 trip, Tagore gave public lectures in Japan in 1924 and 1929 as well. Tagore shared the Japanese indignation at the "Immigration Act of 1924" passed in the United States,<sup>27</sup> and he turned to Japan in 1929 after being

---

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 536.

<sup>25</sup> Kita Reikichi, "Tōyō shisō no fukkatsu" 東洋思想の復活 (Resurrection of Eastern Thought), in *Hikari wa Tōhō yori* 光は東方より (Light Comes from the East) (Tokyo: Dai Nippon Yūbenkai, 1918), pp.172-183.

<sup>26</sup> Kita Reikichi considered Tagore's political view lofty but impractical. See "Tagōru no shisō" タゴールの思想 (Tagore's Thought), in *Ningenkan* 人間観 (View of Human Life) (Tokyo: Kyōbunsha, 1928), pp.413-417. Kita also translated several of Tagore's 1924 lectures (mainly in China, but a few in Japan) from English into Japanese. See Kita Reikichi tr., *Inishie no michi: Tagōru kōenshū* 古の道—タゴール講演集 (The Way of the Old Days: Collection of Tagore's Lectures) (Osaka: Pulatonsha, 1924).

<sup>27</sup> For an analysis, see Nancy Stalker, "Suicide, Boycotts and Embracing Tagore: The Japanese Popular Response to the 1924 US Immigration Exclusion Law," in *Japanese*



offended by an American customs official, yet the “Tagore boom” in Japan never resurged.<sup>28</sup> The dwindling number of Tagore fans in Japan from 1916 on prompts a scholar to make the following comment: “If anything, Rabindranath became the possession of a limited coterie of his admirers.”<sup>29</sup>

Later in 1931, intellectuals around the world prepared a memorial volume, *The Golden Book of Tagore*, in celebration of the poet’s 70<sup>th</sup> birthday, to which Inoue Tetsujirō also contributed an essay. As a response to Tagore’s earlier criticism, this essay defends Japan’s national essence:

The wholesale adoption of Western civilization by this country after the Meiji Restoration of 1868 has for a few obscured the real direction and significance of “Gods’ Own Way,” and has caused no little confusion in our manner of thinking...Yet it is indisputable that the unshakable “Gods’ Own Way” still reigns over the great majority of the Japanese people.<sup>30</sup>

Furthermore, Inoue also euphemized Japan’s march towards militarism:

This does not mean that our *michi* [道; i.e. Way] does not embrace the doctrine of non-resistance, but that it considers the realization of abiding [sic.] international peace and goodwill as more worthy of its dignity. Indeed, it may rightly be said that its aim and ultimate end is the bringing about of world peace.<sup>31</sup>

Generally speaking, this essay was an indication of Japan’s political and

---

*Studies*, Vol.26, No.2, pp.153-170.

<sup>28</sup> A useful list of Asia-related news items appearing in the newspaper *Chūgai Nippō* from 1897 to 1945 helps visualize the decreasing degrees of interest in Tagore around his three major visits to Japan. See Tsukinoki Mizuo 槻木端生, “‘Chūgai Nippō’ shi no Ajia kankei kiji mokuroku” 「中外日報」紙のアジア関係記事目録 (A Catalogue of Asian News in the Chugai Nippo) (sic.), in *Dōhō Daigaku Bukkyō bunka kenkyūsho kiyō* 同朋大学仏教文化研究所紀要 (Bulletin of Dōhō University Buddhist Culture Institute), No.17 (1997), pp.1-375.

<sup>29</sup> Niwa Kyōko, “Tagōru to Nihon,” in *Tagōru chosakushū, bekkā: Tagōru kenkyū*, p.362. The situation might not be as discouraging as the statement suggests. While there was much less public attention and fewer miscellaneous comments about Tagore after the second half of his 1916 trip, later authors who mentioned Tagore, generally speaking, showed genuine interest in his poetry and philosophy.

<sup>30</sup> Inoue Tetsujirō, “The Gods’ Own Way’ and World Peace,” in Ramananda Chatterjee ed., *The Golden Book of Tagore: A Homage to Rabindranath Tagore from India and the World in Celebration of His Seventieth Birthday*, p. 114.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 116.

intellectual milieu before total war with China broke out in 1937. The final significant interaction between Tagore and the Japanese prior to his death in 1941 was the famous dispute with the poet Noguchi Yonejirō. Considering the general indifference to Tagore shown by Japanese literary figures, Noguchi's interest in Tagore—though not always positive—was unusual; from the early 1910s to the 1940s he continued commenting on Tagore's personality, thought, and literature. Knowing Tagore's humanistic stance well and even contributing a poem to the 1931 memorial volume,<sup>32</sup> Noguchi, in defense of his country's militarism, wrote to the aged poet in 1938: "Believe me, it is the war of 'Asia for Asia.'...our young soldiers go to the front. Their minds are light and happy, [as] the war is not for conquest, but the correction of [a] mistaken idea of China[;] I mean [the] Kuomintang government, and for uplifting her simple and ignorant masses to better life and wisdom."<sup>33</sup> Needless to say, Tagore refuted such a pretext and ended his response to Noguchi with a curse on Japanese militarism.

As Takeuchi Yoshimi observed, changing Japanese attitudes towards Tagore reflected a certain form of culturalism in the Taishō era that transformed into full-scale invasion of China in the late 1930s. Such culturalism was characterized by a belief in the full development of human character and talent, and encouragement for absorbing avidly whatever was considered cultural.<sup>34</sup> Arguably, passionate interest in Tagore had developed in this atmosphere. On the other hand, this culturalistic atmosphere is also recognized as lacking in proper concern for serious social problems,<sup>35</sup> which could possibly be the prime factor for the waning of Japanese vigor, as lamented by Ōkawa Shūmei. Nevertheless, Ōkawa did not find Tagore's message disappointing from his nationalistic pan-Asianist viewpoint. To sum up, around the time Tagore first visited Japan in 1916, there was still a complexity in the Japanese intellectual world that fostered a healthy, well-diversified academy. With time,

---

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 184-185.

<sup>33</sup> "Tagore and Noguchi," in Mohit K. Ray ed., *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore, Volume VIII: Miscellaneous Writings*, pp.1135-1136. Noguchi translated two of his own 1938 letters to Tagore into Japanese and included them as "Tagōru e no kōkaijō" タゴールへの公開状 (Open Letters to Tagore) in Noguchi Yonejirō, *Sōshiten* 想思殿 (Hall of Thought) (Tokyo: Shunyōdō Bunko, 1943), pp.327-354.

<sup>34</sup> A summary from the definition in Kōno Toshirō 紅野敏郎, "Taishōki kyōyōshugi" 大正期教養主義 (Culturalism during the Taishō Era), in Hashikawa Bunzō, Kano Masanao 鹿野政直, Hiraoka Toshio 平岡敏夫, eds., *Kindai Nihon shisōshi no kiso chishiki* 近代日本思想史の基礎知識 (Basic Knowledge of Modern Japanese Intellectual History) (Tokyo: Yūhikaku, 1971), p.239.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

however, militaristic ideology prevailed in Japan, and after Tagore's death in 1941, some Japanese, such as Noguchi Yonejirō, Mushanokōji Saneatsu 武者小路実篤 (1885-1976), and Arai Kanpō 荒井寛方 (1878-1945)—a poet, a writer, and a painter—mixed personal memories of Tagore with clear or vague tinges of sentiment towards a “Great East Asia.”<sup>36</sup>

#### 4.3 Second Stage: The Years around Tagore's Centenary in 1961

The first period of intensive studies on Tagore in Japan was from early 1914 to mid-1916. Afterwards his fall from grace was as dramatic as his sudden rise; relevant research also became sporadic. A recollection by Morimoto Tatsuo 森本達雄, one of Japan's leading Indologists, testifies to the history :

I remember clearly the day of my first encounter with Tagore's poems...It was some years after the end of the Second World War....Although I knew the name of Mahatma Gandhi as the great national leader of India from my school days, I had never heard of Rabindranath Tagore, who had been popular among the older generation in Japan. The lingering sound of his beautiful voice...had almost faded away during my school days, in the noisy crunch of boots in military marches.<sup>37</sup>

According to the “Reference Materials on Tagore Issued in Japan,” on which Takeuchi based his observation, we can see that discussions on Tagore did not really cease in Japan, even at the height of WWII and during the gloomy years after the devastation of defeat in 1945. They just became irrelevant, with most of the records being brief introductions or memories scattered in magazines, books, or dictionaries of philosophy.<sup>38</sup>

---

<sup>36</sup> Noguchi Yonejirō, “Shijin Tagōru” 詩人タゴール (Tagore the Poet), in *Tateyo Indo* 起てよ印度 (Rise up, India!) (Tokyo: Shōgakukan, 1942), pp.265-275; Mushanokōji Saneatsu, “Tagōru no shi” タゴールの死 (The Death of Tagore), in *Kibō to kaisō* 希望と回想 (Wishes and Memories) (Tokyo: Kawade Shobō, 1942), pp.134-139; Arai Kanpō, “Shishi Tagōru ō” 志士タゴール翁 (Tagore the Patriot), in *Amidain zakki* 阿弥陀院雑記 (Amida Temple Miscellany) (Hōryūjimura: Ikaruga kokyōsha Shuppanbu, 1943), pp.1-27. Mushanokōji's aspiration for a great East Asia can be discerned in other works in the book.

<sup>37</sup> Morimoto Tatsuo, “My Tagore,” in Bhudeb Chaudhuri and K. G. Subramanyan, eds., *Rabindranath Tagore and the Challenges of Today* (Shimla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1988), pp.286-287.

<sup>38</sup> See note 3. The list is not exhaustive but reflects the general trend of Tagore studies in

The second tide of Tagore studies rose in Japan from 1958 in preparation for Tagore's centenary in 1961. The event was well celebrated, in accordance with the international vogue, but there were deeper concerns that addressed the postwar Japanese intellectual world. For instance, a new magazine, *Apollon*, appeared in May, 1958. This magazine bore the subtitle, *Cultural Bridge between the East & the West*, and designated the first issue as a "Special Number for Rabindranath Tagore." The opening statement reads:

*Apollon* is a magazine that synthesizes diverse fields such as thought, literature, and the arts. It aims at harmonious fusion of Eastern and Western civilizations and the creation of a new spiritual culture in the 20<sup>th</sup> century...We decided to dedicate the first issue to Rabindranath Tagore with the aim of achieving this objective.<sup>39</sup>

This was the first time in nearly three decades that an issue of a Japanese magazine had been dedicated to Tagore.<sup>40</sup> Although *Apollon* was rather short-lived (four issues in total), it marked the beginning of another round of systematic Tagore studies in Japan. This round, however, was somewhat different in nature than the former "Tagore boom": it attempted to remind the Japanese of Tagore's foresight and sincere warnings rather than to reintroduce him as a star. In other words, a more or less "Japan-centric" form of Tagore research was taking shape, with the interaction between the poet and the nation being the core issue. The editor's postscript to the "Special Number" of *Apollon* well expresses this attitude:

Tagore showed respect and love for Japan...but his criticism of Japanese militarism caused a sudden cooling of Tagore fever, which

---

Japan prior to 1961. However, evidence shows that post-war review of Tagore in Japan can be traced to an early date. For a 1947 example, see Hashimoto Fukuo 橋本福夫, "Tagōru no Tōyō teki hyūmanizumu" タゴールの東洋的ヒューマニズム (Tagore's Eastern Humanism), in *Hashimoto Fukuo Chosakushū III: Eibei bungakuron* 橋本福夫著作集 III—英米文学論 (Works of Hashimoto Fukuo 3: On English and American Literature) (Tokyo: Hayakawa Shobō, 1989), pp.246-250. This article is not mentioned in the list.

<sup>39</sup> "Hakkan no kotoba" 発刊のことば (Opening Statement), in *Aporon: shisō to bungaku* アポロン—思想と文学 (Apollon: Cultural Bridge between the East & the West), Vol.1, No.1: *Tagōru tokushū* タゴール特集 (Special Number for Rabindranath Tagore), p.2. All English titles are given.

<sup>40</sup> The journal *Igirisu bungaku* イギリス文学 (English Literature) issued an extra Tagore number in June 1929, which was the last such special issue before 1958.

was unfortunate for Japan. In planning this special number, we were surprised to find that students and youngsters today are mostly ignorant of this great Eastern poet. Tagore was the first Nobel laureate from Asia and a profound thinker who, along with Gandhi, inspired the national independence movement of India. He also deeply influenced Prime Minister Nehru.<sup>41</sup>

This statement is factual and supports Morimoto's reminiscences cited above, but the logic and mindset it embodies was quite new for Japan. Before the 1950s, very few Japanese regarded the cooling of Tagore fever as "unfortunate." While Tagore had long been admired as Asia's first Nobel Prize winner, his active role in India's independence movement was overlooked by many Japanese intellectuals, who were more willing to label him as "a poet from a ruined country."

Actually, this renewed interest in Tagore belonged to a larger-scale reaffirmation of humanism in postwar Japan, for which many other foreign authors provided spiritual resources. The French writer Romain Rolland and the German writer Hermann Hesse (1877-1962) were among the frequently reviewed figures. Not only did discussions on them appear in the later issues of *Apollon*, Morimoto also says that in remembering his search for spiritual anchors in the late 1940s, "I was then a student of a university in Kyoto and was earnestly seeking in literature and religion a new mental prop which would never betray me again. Goethe, Romain Rolland, Tolstoy, Hermann Hesse and others were my favorite authors."<sup>42</sup> However, Tagore still occupied a special position among these foreign figures in postwar Japanese academia, precisely because of his much strained relationship with inter-war Japan. After having been engulfed in militarism and suffered from a ruinous defeat, Japanese intellectuals became willing to take seriously the spirit of world brotherhood Tagore proposed decades earlier. In a 1958 work that introduces many Eastern spiritual mentors, the chapter on Tagore ends with the following account: "Tagore's last wish was to see the realization of 'the world as one family' based on the supreme compassion of the Buddha, which must also become the wish of

---

<sup>41</sup> "Henshū goki" 編集後記 (Editor's Postscript), in *ibid.*, p.191.

<sup>42</sup> Morimoto Tatsuo, "My Tagore," in Bhudeb Chaudhuri and K. G. Subramanyan, eds., *Rabindranath Tagore and the Challenges of Today*, p.287.

the Japanese.”<sup>43</sup>

The first series of selected works of Tagore in Japanese translation came out in installments from 1959 (former publications were all single volumes).<sup>44</sup> Starting from the same year, several magazines were launched to commemorate the coming centenary of Tagore, including *Bulletin of Tagore Memorial Association* (one issue, 1959), *Monthly Bulletin of Tagore Memorial Association*, which was renamed *Sachiya* from the second number (twenty-two issues in total, 1959-1962), and *Tagore* (six issues, 1960-1965). None of these lasted long, but a great portion of articles contained therein deals with Tagore’s interaction with Japanese intellectuals, his relationship with the country as a whole, and his humanistic and pacifist message.<sup>45</sup> A highlight of the celebration in Japan of Tagore’s centenary was the publication of an essay collection edited by the Tagore Memorial Association, which still serves as a crucial reference for Japanese scholars who are interested in Tagore today. Both of the two prefaces to the volume are worth citing. Ōkura Kunihiro 大倉邦彦 (1882-1971) stated that “perhaps what was most significant in celebrating Tagore’s centenary was the revelation of his spirit in the present age, and the finding of ways to solve contemporary problems from his thought.”<sup>46</sup> Suzuki Daisetsu 鈴木大拙 (1870-1966; known as Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki in the West), the leading Japanese Buddhist scholar of his time, commented that “the philosophy of Easterners is never detached from humankind...Our art is grounded in the human world as well...I believe Tagore is a typical Eastern thinker and artist. Although we do not have such philosophers as Hegel, Kant, and Aristotle in India, China, or Japan, it is not a minus for the East at all.”<sup>47</sup>

Apparently, the very reasons Tagore was much criticized from the 1910s to

---

<sup>43</sup> Inada Kizō 稲津紀三, “Tagōru” タゴール (Tagore), in Furukawa Tetsushi 古川哲史 ed., *Ningen no kyōshi: tōyō hen* 人間の教師—東洋編 (Mentors of Humankind: the East) (Osaka: Osaka kyōiku tosho kabushiki kaisha, 1958), p.248.

<sup>44</sup> Eight volumes were planned but only seven of them were published from 1959 to 1961 by Aporonsha, publisher of the magazine *Apollon*.

<sup>45</sup> *Tagōru kinenkai kaihō* タゴール記念会会報 (Bulletin of Tagore Memorial Association), No.1 (Tokyo: Tagōru kinenkai, 1959); *Tagōru kinenkai geppō* タゴール記念会月報 and *Sachiya* さちや (Monthly Bulletin of Tagore Memorial Association), Nos.1-22 (Tokyo: Tagōru kinenkai, 1959-1962); *Tagōru* タゴール (Tagore), Nos.1-6 (Nagasaki: Nagasaki Tagōru kinenkai, 1960-1965).

<sup>46</sup> Ōkura Kunihiro, “Tagōru seitan hyakunensai ni yosete” タゴール生誕百年祭によせて (Foreword), in *Tagōru kinenkai* ed., *Tagōru seitan hyakunensai kinen ronbunshū*, p.2. The English title is given.

<sup>47</sup> Suzuki Daisetsu, “Tagōrushī ni tsukite omou koto” タゴール氏につきて思ふこと (My Feelings on Tagore), in *ibid.*, p.5. The English title is given.

the 1930s, such as for his opposition to total Westernization and his proposition of a spiritual Asian civilization, became great inspiration for Japanese intellectuals in the 1950s. Contemporaneous with this trend of reevaluating Tagore's thought was development of critical reflection on Japan's historical path in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It would be an exaggeration to say that Tagore was the agent that brought about such reflection, but his Japanese experiences provided a brilliant case for later generations to observe how Japan was becoming overwhelmed by militaristic and ultranationalist ideologies during the inter-war period. As Takeuchi Yoshimi pointed out, the 1961 memorial volume contains three relevant articles on Asian nationalism.<sup>48</sup> In the history of Tagore studies in Japan, these articles not only constituted the first intensive effort to examine Tagore's criticism of nationalism and Japan's militarization, but also heralded many later works that deal with the issue in greater detail. This is a development that Takeuchi expected and would be glad to see.

One thing should be noted before finishing this section. To the end of the "Reference Materials on Tagore Issued in Japan" appended to the 1961 memorial volume, the editors added a concluding remark: "While Tagore studies in Japan have not yet entered a real research phase, by tracing the publishing dates of related documents we can construct an overview of our national character and intentions, as well as some of the intellectual trends of the time. We would feel honored if this observation could serve as a guideline for future research."<sup>49</sup> This wish is very similar to the one expressed by Takeuchi. Nevertheless, the interest in Tagore rekindled from 1958 cooled soon after the celebration of Tagore's centenary was over. After all, Tagore had already become "the possession of a limited coterie of his admirers" after his 1916 visit. Even in intellectual circles, this second tide did not last long, and it would take another two decades for Japanese academia to formulate a somewhat tenuous third stage in Tagore studies.

---

<sup>48</sup> Sakamoto Tokumatsu 坂本徳松, "Tagōru to Ajia nashonarizumu" タゴールとアジア・ナショナリズム (Tagore and Asian Nationalism), in *ibid.*, pp.241-262; Okakura Koshirō 岡倉古志郎, "Tagōru to heiwayōzon" タゴールと平和共存 (Tagore and the Peaceful Co-existence), in *ibid.*, pp.263-269; Rōyama Yoshirō 蠟山芳郎, "Tagōru to Nihon e no keikoku" タゴールと日本への警告 (Tagore and His Warning to Japan), in *ibid.*, pp.271-282. All English titles are given.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 37 (from the back).

#### 4.4 Third Stage: The Years since the 1980s

Unlike the previous two stages of Tagore studies occurring in the 1910s and 1950s respectively, the third stage that began roughly from the 1980s was not initiated through any particular event, such as Tagore's Nobel Prize, his visit to Japan, or celebration of his centenary. Despite the lack of a clear beginning of this stage, a second series of selected works of Tagore in Japanese translation was published in installments from 1981, which contains more works, explanatory notes, and background information than did the 1959 series. In addition to eleven volumes of translated works, there is a supplementary volume of Tagore studies that deals with three major topics—"Tagore's Life and Thought," "Tagore and the World," and "The World of Tagore's Works"—with each of the sections containing multiple chapters (some written by Japanese scholars and some translated from foreign languages).<sup>50</sup> Here we can see a new attempt at systematic understanding of Tagore in Japan, which is not intensive or following any international trends, but indicates academic and cultural interests that are well diversified. While preparing for this new series, Morimoto Tatsuo was also engaged in translation of an English biography, *Tagore: A Life*. He states in the "Translator's Foreword":

Isn't the negation of Tagore before the War and oblivion after the War a hidden sign of the fundamental poverty and lack of thought of Japan?...Nonetheless, in recent years, Japan has become deeply contextualized in the world; the spirit of world citizenship and the wisdom of harmonious fusion between humankind and nature have become necessary. People who are concerned with these issues have started to note Tagore's early message.<sup>51</sup>

This statement provides a clue for us to understand what the Japanese have been seeking in Tagore's message from the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, that is, his humanism, view of world brotherhood, and a kind of spiritual environmentalism.

---

<sup>50</sup> This last volume of the series was published in 1993. For more information, see note 21.

<sup>51</sup> Morimoto Tatsuo, "Yakusha maegaki" 訳者まえがき (Translator's Foreword), in Krishna Kripalani, Morimoto Tatsuo tr., *Tagōru no shōgai* タゴールの生涯 (Tagore: A Life) (Tokyo: Daisan Bunmeisha, 1981), pp.1-2.



None of these issues is new, but they have acquired new meanings and impetus in the age of globalization. This trend is well exemplified by another 1981 volume authored by Azuma Kazuo 我妻和男 (1931-2011), the leading Japanese scholar of Bengali literature. This book, *Tagore*, is more introductory than critical, but is somewhat special in terms of content. Since the 1910s, many articles or treatises on Tagore's literature or thought have appeared, yet a monograph that aims at a fuller account of Tagore's life activities and his intellectual background had been absent in Japan. Therefore, along with the new series of Tagore's works and the biography, Azuma's book also contributed to broadening Japanese knowledge of Tagore in the early 1980s. Nonetheless, as explained in the previous two sections, the issue of "Tagore and Japan" is a unique historical research paradigm that has developed around Tagore's criticism of Japan's Westernization. In this regard, Azuma's introductory volume is a product of an established convention in research. It starts with the chapter "Tagore's Praise of and Warning for Japan," reviewing the forty-year interaction between Tagore and the Japanese. Furthermore, the book ends with "Tagore in the World" and "The Modern Significance of Tagore," embodying a transition in Japanese intellectual concerns from the reflection upon pre-war thought and politics in the 1950s to an appeal to global humanism in the 1980s.<sup>52</sup>

As Takeuchi Yoshimi observed, Tagore's criticism of "Asian nationalism" was gaining increasing attention in Japan around 1961. In the new wave of Tagore studies from the early 1980s, this issue still constitutes a major focus. For instance, in 1982, Ōzawa Yoshihiro 大澤吉博 (1948-2005) published a book entitled *Light and Shades of Nationalism: Sōseki, Kipling, Tagore*, which compares the three writers' views of nationalism through both textual and contextual approaches.<sup>53</sup> A more frequent object of comparison is Okakura Kakuzō, who was the most renowned articulator of a common Eastern culture in early twentieth-century Japan and greatly inspired Tagore's pan-Asian idealism.<sup>54</sup> Complementary to this focus on nationalism, Japanese scholars are

---

<sup>52</sup> For the publication details of this book, see note 6. This volume belongs to the 80-volume series of *Man's Intellectual Heritage* published by Kōdansha. Tagore is regarded as one of the greatest thinkers in the history of humankind.

<sup>53</sup> Ōzawa Yoshihiro, *Nashonarizumu no meian: Sōseki, Kipuringu, Tagōru* ナショナリズムの明暗—漱石・キプリング・タゴール (Light and Shade of Nationalism: Sōseki, Kipling, Tagore) (Tokyo: Tokyo UP, 1982).

<sup>54</sup> For an overview of Tagore's exchange of ideas with Okakura, see Morimoto Tatsuo,

rediscovering the full spectrum of Tagore's creativity as well. While his educational ideal, a village reform project, and achievements in songwriting and painting received intermittent discussions from the beginning, these aspects of Tagore were treated in Japan in a more intensive manner in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, echoing a global interest in Tagore as a multifaceted genius. Another introductory volume by Azuma Kazuo published in 2006 reflects these ramified interests to a certain degree.<sup>55</sup>

Strictly speaking, Tagore studies in Japan from the 1980s have not really formed a trend, but are less sporadic than in the previous two decades; discussions are now systematic, elaborate, and diversified. Nevertheless, the diversification of Tagore studies in Japan does not eclipse the main theme of searching for a humanistic civilization, which was the principal message that Tagore imparted to Japan in 1916. After decades of Tagore languishing in oblivion, both postwar retrospection and the accelerating pace of globalization have obliged the Japanese to reexamine his remonstrations. In this vein, he is often discussed in conjunction with Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948) or Romain Rolland with a view to their shared spiritual ideals. For example, Ebihara Tokuo 蛭原徳夫 (1904-1988) asserts in his *Romain Rolland and Tagore* that “of the two men, one is a Westerner and the other is an Asian, which has very important significance; perhaps it could even be said that as a universal problem of humankind [i.e. racial and cultural divisions] they assume the most inestimable, lofty symbolism.”<sup>56</sup>

A symposium convened in Japan in 2001, “Rediscovering Tagore and Gandhi,” claimed that “What Tagore and Gandhi kept conveying to us is: 1. harmony and symbiosis between nature and humankind; 2. fusion and dialogue between West and East; 3. interaction and reconciliation between races, nations,

---

“Tagōru to Okakura Tenshin” タゴールと岡倉天心 (Tagore and Okakura Tenshin), in *Tagōru chosakushū, bekkā: Tagōru kenkyū*, pp.186-205. Okamoto Yoshiko 岡本佳子 compares the views of nationalism of the two figures in detail. See “Rabindranātho Tagōru to Okakura Kakuzō (Tenshin): nashonarizumu o megutte” ラビンドラナート・タゴールと岡倉覚三 (天心) —ナショナリズムをめぐって (Rabindranath Tagore and Okakura Kakuzō (Tenshin) on Nationalism), in *Asian Cultural Studies, Special Issue*, 17 (2008), pp.49-75. There is also an English work on their Asian imaginations and ideals. See: Rustom Bharucha, *Another Asia: Rabindranath Tagore & Okakura Tenshin* (New Delhi: Oxford UP, 2006).

<sup>55</sup> Azuma Kazuo, *Tagōru: shi, shisō, shōgai* タゴール—詩・思想・生涯 (Tagore: Poetry, Thought, Life) (Kashiwa: Reitaku UP, 2006).

<sup>56</sup> Ebihara Tokuo, *Roman Roran to Tagōru* ロマン・ロランとタゴール (Romain Rolland and Tagore) (Tokyo: Daisan Bunmeisha, 1980), p.161.

and religions. At the basis of these concerns is the respect for ‘life’.”<sup>57</sup> Furthermore, from August 2011, the monthly *Todai* also started publishing in installments a dialogue between Ikeda Daisaku 池田大作 and Bharati Mukherjee. The dialogue was entitled “Poetry of the Global Civilization: A Talk on Tagore and World Citizens,” which constituted a non-academic interest in Tagore in Japan.<sup>58</sup>

This latest surge of interest in Tagore reached a climax in 2011 when Japan, together with many other countries, celebrated the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Indian poet.<sup>59</sup> As mentioned, Tagore’s multiple artistic and intellectual legacies came into the limelight but, at least in Japan, it is his earnest appeal for world peace and cultural fusion that continues to receive particular attention.<sup>60</sup>

#### 4.5 A Century of “Tagore and Japan”

This chapter reviews the fluctuations of Tagore’s image in Japan in the past century. The Japanese approach to Tagore has always been unique because of his special message for Japan at a momentous time in modern history. By the time Tagore visited Japan in 1916, Japan had already become the strongest non-Western military and economic power, had acquired Taiwan (1895) and Korea (1905) as colonies, and was seeking to annex the northern part of China. Japan sought the notorious Twenty-One Demands of China in 1915. Under the circumstances, Tagore came to Japan in the capacity of “the representative of the East,” praising Japan as inheriting the best of both the traditional East and

---

<sup>57</sup> *Sōsō no jiyū o susumeru kai* 葬送の自由をすすめる会, ed., *Tagōru to Gandī saihakken* タゴールとガンディー再発見 (Rediscovering Tagore and Gandhi) (Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 2001), p.ii. The discussants at this symposium, including Morimoto Tatsuo, Azuma Kazuo, Yamaori Tetsuo 山折哲雄, and Nagasaki Nobuko 長崎暢子, are all reputed Indologists or religious scholars in Japan.

<sup>58</sup> Ikeda Daisaku and Bharati Mukerjee, “Aratana chikyū bunmei no uta o: Tagōru to sekai shimin o kataru” 新たな地球文明の詩を—タゴールと世界市民を語る (Poetry of the Global Civilization: A Talk on Tagore and World Citizen) in *Todai* 灯台 (Lighthouse), No.611, (August, 2011), pp.44-59.

<sup>59</sup> Information on many of the events can still be found online. An exhibition of Tagore’s close relationship with Japan was held at the Ōkura Memorial Hall, Yokoyama, in November 2011. For the activities, see the special number “Indo no shisei Tagōru to Nihon bunka” インドの詩聖タゴールと日本文化 (The Great Indian Poet Tagore and Japanese Culture), in *Ōkurayama ronshū*, Vol.58 (March, 2013), pp.1-102.

<sup>60</sup> For an example of this concern, see Okakura Takashi 岡倉登志 “Rabindranato Tagōru no shisō to kōdō: Tagōru seitan hyakugojoyūshūnen ni yosete” ラビンドラナート・タゴールの思想と行動—タゴール生誕百五十周年によせて— (Rabindranath Tagore’s Thought and Action: For Tagore’s 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary), in *Tōyō kenkyū* 東洋研究 (Studies of Asia and Africa), No.177 (November, 2010), pp.1-29 (from the left).

the modern West on the one hand, and urging it to assume the responsibility of mitigating the over-aggressive aspects of Western modernity on the other.<sup>61</sup>

As has been demonstrated, in the 1910s when Tagore had not yet involved himself in ideological debates in Japan, he received intellectual attention deserving of an international luminary. However, once Japan's modernization was accomplished under a strong government whose neo-traditionalism fostered belief in a mystic national polity and imperial lineage, a bent towards ultra-nationalism remained a conspicuous element in modern Japanese intellectual history. This ideological undercurrent, complicated by economic and political conditions, surfaced rapidly in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Tagore witnessed this process firsthand through changing Japanese attitudes towards himself in 1916. Decades later, the disastrous conclusion of WWII not only destroyed the Japanese empire but also swept away its remaining memories of Tagore. It was not until several years after the war that he was rediscovered. Many authors started reviewing Tagore's poetry and philosophy, but his warning against Japan's militarization was what gained the most attention. This issue still receives frequent examination in the age of globalization. Hence, from the very beginning, Tagore's image in Japan has been intertwined with the country's self-identity. While the research topic of "Tagore and Japan" is inevitably politically oriented, we see a return to cultural concerns from the early 1980s. The new cultural concerns, nevertheless, are more ethical than critical compared with the first trends in Tagore studies before 1916, precisely because this revisiting of Tagore is connected with Japan's memory of war and its postwar intellectual milieu. Moreover, as Nakajima Takeshi indicates, in the 1910s, the Japanese were accustomed to viewing Tagore from an Orientalist perspective, characterizing him as feminine and coming from a mysterious, exotic, and uncivilized country.<sup>62</sup> Based on Inoue Tetsujirō's and Tanimoto Tomerī's progressive-minded remarks mentioned in Section 2, it is not difficult to imagine that such an imperialist view was prevalent in early twentieth-century Japan. Nonetheless, with the rapid change of global environment after WWII, many Japanese scholars have sought to reexamine the idea of Asia, and to seek Asian cooperation through more humanistic and

---

<sup>61</sup> See Chapter 3 for a detailed analysis.

<sup>62</sup> Nakajima Takeshi, "Tagōru, awareru: Taishō shoki no 'Tagōru netsu' to shorainichi o megutte," in *Bulletin of Okura Institute for the Study of Spiritual Culture*, No.55 (March, 2009), pp.230-233.

cultural approaches. For them Tagore provides a rich intellectual resource.

The arguments of this chapter mainly derive from Takeuchi Yoshimi's observations. While Takeuchi made insightful comments on Tagore's involvement in modern Japanese intellectual history, he underestimated the complexity of the relationship between Tagore and China by claiming that "in China, he roused sympathy as a resistance poet by singing songs of national independence."<sup>63</sup> "Tagore in modern Chinese intellectual history" constitutes another significant issue and is treated separately,<sup>64</sup> yet it is worth mentioning that Takeuchi's view, though not accurate, reflects the self-criticism of certain postwar Japanese thinkers, who felt regret for the great suffering their country inflicted on China and other neighboring countries. By contrast, reactions to Tagore in two of Japan's colonies, Taiwan and Korea, seem to have focused mainly on anti-imperialism. Literati in the two colonies found great inspiration in Tagore's works, although the Indian poet never visited either place.<sup>65</sup> Finally, as indicated in Chapter 1, India and the West form the two mainstream approaches to Tagore studies. While Indians tend to emphasize Tagore's versatility and creativity, Westerners—especially British and Americans—have tended to examine Tagore in a postcolonial context in recent years. Obviously, the convention of Tagore studies in Japan is historically contextualized and quite different from these two mainstream approaches. Such a difference in research methodologies, however, is not one between center and periphery, but reveals a crucial episode in modern Japanese intellectual history and demonstrates the complexity of both sides—Tagore and Japan—of the inquiry.

---

<sup>63</sup> Takeuchi Yoshimi, "Tagōru to Chūgoku," in *Takeuchi Yoshimi zenshū*, Vol.5, p.220.

<sup>64</sup> See Chapters 5 and 6.

<sup>65</sup> Wang Baiyuan 王白淵, one of the Taiwanese poets writing in Japanese, expressed indirectly his anti-imperialist thought through his praise of Tagore. See "Shisei Tagōru" 詩聖タゴール (The Great Poet Tagore), in *Toge no michi* 棘の道 (Road of Thorns), in Kawahara Isao 河原功, ed., *Taiwan shishū* 台灣詩集 (Poem Collections of Taiwan) (Tokyo: Ryokuin Shobō, 2003), pp.93-121. Wang Baiyuan's *Toge no michi* and the general response to Tagore in colonial Taiwan is discussed in Liu Shu-chin's 柳書琴 *Jingji zhi dao: Taiwan luriqingnian de wenxuehuodong yu wenhuakangzheng* 荊棘之道—臺灣旅日青年的文學活動與文化抗爭 (Road of Thorns: The Literary Activities and Cultural Resistance of Taiwanese Youths Studying in Japan) (Taipei: Linking Publishing, 2009), Ch3, pp.77-135. For a review of Koreans' reception of Tagore, see Kim Yang-shik, "Tagore and Korea," in *Rabindranath Tagore in Perspective* (Calcutta: Visva-Bharati, 1989), pp.217-225.

### Part III

#### Tagore and His “Eastern Asia”: China



## 5. The Chinese Experiences of Dewey, Russell, and Tagore during the May Fourth Era

### 5.1 A Facet of Modern Chinese Intellectual History

Following Part II that explores Tagore's *Nihonjinron* in the context of modern Japanese intellectual history, Part III focuses on Tagore's relationship with another pillar that constituted his Asian vision: China. Differences between Tagore's attitudes towards new and old Asia become apparent by contrasting his relationship with the two countries. Changing views of Tagore in Japan and China are in turn closely related to their respective perceptions of the East-West paradigm.

This chapter compares Tagore's Chinese experiences with those of Dewey and Russell during the May Fourth Era. An examination of their observations of and advice to China, as well as the reactions they aroused, will shed light on a major trend in modern Chinese intellectual history. These visits, either as separate cases or as a general cultural phenomenon, have elicited frequent discussions.<sup>1</sup> By examining the relationships between these foreign luminaries and contemporary Chinese intellectuals, this chapter complements Chapter 3 and demonstrates how the views of such ideas as "modernity" and "Asia" diverged in early twentieth-century Japan and China. For the sake of coherence, it is necessary to explicate the key ideas that constitute the core of this chapter.

First of all, what was the May Fourth Movement? In spite of myriad answers, what is indisputable is that researchers rarely focus on the parade spearheaded by some Peking University students on the date of May 4, 1919, but regard the event as a symbol of Chinese modernization. The significance of this symbol has elicited innumerable and widely diversified interpretations for decades. Indeed, the May Fourth Movement is too complex in terms of content, constituents, and ramifications for a unanimous definition. With the change of political and cultural milieus, views on different aspects of the Movement have

---

<sup>1</sup> For a recent review of this cultural phenomenon in connection with modern Chinese intellectual history, see Zheng Shiqu 鄭師渠, "Wusiqianhou waiguomingzhe laihuajiangxue yu Zhongguosixiangjie de biandong" 五四前後外國名哲來華講學與中國思想界的變動 (Visits to and Lecturing in China of Celebrated Foreign Thinkers during the May Fourth Era and Transformation of the Chinese Intellectual World), in *Jingdaishi yanjiu* 近代史研究 (Modern Chinese History Studies), No.188, (March, 2012), pp.4-27.



inevitably changed in accordance with spatial and temporal requirements. As Yu Ying-shih 余英時 comments: “The May Fourth intellectual world consisted of communities of great variety and fluidity. Not only did there exist many ‘May Fourth projects’ that were changeable and that contradicted each other, but each project itself contained different versions. Perhaps an accurate generalization can be made about the May Fourth Movement only through an understanding that encompasses its multiple facets and directions.”<sup>2</sup> Based on this multiplicity, this chapter understands the May Fourth Movement from a broad perspective, which Chow Tse-tsung 周策縱 (1916-2007) delineates in his classic, *The May Fourth Movement: Intellectual Revolution in Modern China*, as follows:

The May Fourth Movement then may be defined as a complicated phenomenon including the “new thought tide,” the literary revolution, the student movement, the merchants’ and workers’ strikes, and the boycott against Japan, as well as other social and political activities of the new intellectuals, all inspired by the patriotic sentiments after the Twenty-one Demands and the Shantung resolution, and by the spirit of Western learning and the desire to reevaluate tradition in the light of science and democracy in order to build a new China.<sup>3</sup>

This definition treats the patriotic movement and the New Culture Movement evenly without simplistically identifying or separating the two currents. As to the beginning and end of the Movement, while Chow observed that most significant events took place between early 1917 and late 1921, he did not apply strict demarcation. This chapter follows this flexible timeframe.

As specified by Chow, May Fourth is generally regarded as a movement that pursued “Western learning” in order “to build a new China.” However, as the political predicament of early twentieth-century China did not allow people to thoroughly digest Western thought, the “learning” hardly went further than

---

<sup>2</sup> Yu Ying-shih, “Wenyifuxing hu? Qimengyundong hu? Yige shixuejia dui Wusiyundong de fansi” 文藝復興乎？啟蒙運動乎？——一個史學家對五四運動的反思 (The Renaissance? The Enlightenment? A Historian’s Reflection on the May Fourth Movement), in Yu Ying-shih et al., *Wusi xinlun* 五四新論 (New Interpretations of May Fourth) (Taipei: Linking Publishing, 1999), p.26.

<sup>3</sup> Chow Tse-tsung, *The May Fourth Movement: Intellectual Revolution in Modern China* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1975), p.5.

mere borrowing and peddling. Another theory is that traditional Chinese thinking was subject to “pragmatist reasoning” (實用理性), which demanded practical use of imported Western ideas and was thus unfavorable for exploration of fundamental principles.<sup>4</sup> In any case, importation of foreign ideas during the May Fourth era was rather haphazard and hasty. The most expedient approach, which mainly aimed for short-term social impact, was to invite notable foreign figures to give public lectures or conduct academic seminars in China.

These short-term visits of foreign luminaries aroused transitory interest in China, although their long-term effects are subject to doubt. Nonetheless, by examining the observations these visitors made of China and the (mis)interpretation of their messages by the Chinese people, it is possible to sketch a specific—rather confused, actually—profile of the modern Chinese intellectual world. Furthermore, exploration of the exchange of ideas between the Chinese and foreign visitors will reveal how China was positioned in the hierarchy of world civilizations, and how messages from the East and the West weighed respectively in the thinking of May Fourth intellectuals. I will start with an explanation of the background of these invitations.

## 5.2 The Visits of Many International Luminaries to China

In *The Search for Modern China*, Jonathan Spence contributes a section to “The Facets of May Fourth,” giving an account of the intensive flow of notable foreign visitors to China around 1920:

Bertrand Russell traveled extensively in China in 1920 and 1921...Russell’s brilliant expositions of mathematical logic enthralled his audiences, while his ideas on the importance of pacifism also found ready listeners. John Dewey lived in Peking during 1919 and 1920 [i.e. 1921], taught several courses, traveled and lectured widely...En route to Japan, Albert Einstein visited China in late 1922, just after completing his first work on general relativity theory. A little later, in

---

<sup>4</sup> Li Zehou 李澤厚, “Qimeng yu jiuwang de shuangchong bianzou” 啓蒙與救亡的雙重變奏 “Duet of Enlightening and Saving Country,” in *Xiandai Zhongguo sixiang shilun* 現代中國思想史論 (On the Intellectual History of Modern China) (Beijing: Joint Publishing, 2008), pp.1-46.

1923 [i.e. 1924], Rabindranath Tagore, the Nobel Prize-winning Indian poet, gave a Chinese lecture tour to present his views on aesthetics, nonviolence, and the construction of rural communities...<sup>5</sup>

Numerous visits by foreign luminaries constituted a cultural phenomenon in early twentieth-century China, as Spence comments: “Through the force of such characters and ideas, the May Fourth movement brought changes in consciousnesses that in turn opened new possibilities for life and action in China.”<sup>6</sup> Of course, those mentioned above are the most prominent; many lesser-known visitors from Europe, America, Russia, and Japan also contributed to the trend. In addition, certain figures who did not actually visit China also exerted influence through their writings, such as the Russian novelist Leo Tolstoy (1828-1910), the Russian anarchists Mikhail Bakunin (1814-1876) and Peter Kropotkin (1842-1921), the German philosopher Rudolf Eucken (1846-1926), the Norwegian dramatist Henrik Ibsen (1828-1906), the American humanist Irving Babbitt (1865-1933), the Japanese leftist economist Kawakami Hajime 河上肇 (1879-1946), the Japanese writer and practitioner of the “New Village Movement,” Mushanokōji Saneatsu, and so forth. Hence, microanalyses of the general trend will reveal a more nuanced portrayal of the Chinese intellectual world in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Liang Qichao was a key individual in the project of inviting international luminaries. From the end of 1918, he went to Europe with five colleagues for a cultural, social, and political tour. Soon after returning to China in early 1920, Liang published his *Record of Reflections during the European Trip*,<sup>7</sup> and subsequently invited foreign thinkers to come to China for intellectual interaction—an idea he conceived during his European trip. The “Chinese Lecture Association” was established for this purpose in the autumn of 1920.<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> Jonathan D. Spence, *The Search for Modern China* (New York, London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1991), p.317.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> Liang Qichao, *Ouyou xinyinglu* 歐遊心影錄 (Record of Reflections during the European Trip), in *Yinbingshi heji* 飲冰室合集 (Collected Works of Yinbing Chamber) (Taipei: Chung Hwa Book Company Limited, 1970), *Wenji* 文集 (Monographs), no.23.

<sup>8</sup> For a brief introduction to the “Chinese Lecture Association,” see Li Yongqiang 李永強, “Liang Qichao yu Jiangxueshe” 梁啟超與講學社 (Liang Qichao and the Chinese Lecture Association), in *Journal of Heze University*, Vol.28, No.6 (December, 2006), pp.97-100. In addition, Chang Peng-yuan 張朋園 also mentions the function of the Chinese Lecture Association when he discusses the relationship between Liang Qichao and the May Fourth Movement. See “Liang Qichao yu Wusi yundong” 梁啟超與五四運動 (Liang Qichao and the

When Liang addressed the party for welcoming Bertrand Russell, he claimed:

Our attitude towards the cultural movement current in China is “to import [foreign ideas] without limits.” The world is now in a time of change, and many schools of thought are inevitably mushrooming in this age of skeptical experimentation. Although contradictions are visible superficially, each of them contributes positively to future development.<sup>9</sup>

The meaning of Liang’s statement can be better understood by considering his background. Liang was one of the pioneers of political reform in late imperial China. He assumed responsibility for the importation of new ideas to enlighten the Chinese people, and proposed the system of constitutional monarchy. After the reformists and revolutionists parted ways, however, he gradually came to be viewed as a spent force. After establishment of the Republic, Liang continued to involve himself in both political and academic activities for years, but he finally devoted himself to study, which led to the European trip. Originally a fervent Westernizer, the devastation of Europe after WWI obliged him to reexamine the pros and cons of Chinese tradition; through discussions with prominent thinkers such as Henri-Louis Bergson (1859-1941), Liang became convinced that the outstanding aspects of Chinese culture could provide remedy for the ills of the modern West. Therefore, although his *Record of Reflections during the European Trip* was aimed to be a reference for domestic reforms, he showed great expectation in the book for the revival of Chinese culture, thereby eliciting diverse comments from various factions. It can be said that if unlimited import of foreign ideas was imperative for a culturally-sensitive political moderate such as Liang, then it must have been the top priority for those more Western-minded Chinese intellectuals in the 1920s.

Invitations of foreign figures to China being delimited by both human and material resources, the issue of choice and representativeness emerged, from

---

May Fourth Movement) in Wong Young-tsu 汪榮祖 ed., *Wusi yanjiu lunwenji* 五四研究論文集 (Essays of May Fourth Studies) (Taipei: Linking Publishing, 1979), p.277-310.

<sup>9</sup> Liang Qichao, “Zai Jiangxueshe huanying Ruosu zhi shenghui yanshuoci” 在講學社歡迎羅素之盛會演說詞 (Address for Welcoming Russell at the Party Hosted by the Chinese Lecture Association), in Xia Xiaohong 夏曉虹 ed., *Yinbingshi heji jiwaiwen* 飲冰室合集集外文 (Addenda to *Collected Works of the Yinbing Chamber*) (Beijing: Peking UP, 2005), Vol.2, p.855.

which derived a result almost inevitable for a radicalized China: namely, foreign figures became objects of both factional admiration and criticism simultaneously. As will be shown below, conflicts were usually more ideological than critical; while the leftists stood firmly against liberalist or conservative ideas, there was strife between non-leftists as well. Furthermore, no doubt such invitations were made out of good will, yet their real effects were questioned by contemporary and later observers. Before Tagore came to China in 1924, Guo Moruo 郭沫若 (1892-1978) had already commented sarcastically:

After Dewey left, Russell came; after Russell left, Driesch came...What we have learned from past experiences is that the successive invitations are nothing more than the revelation of our vainglory. We do not have profound understanding of their thought and necessity for their message, we are simply motivated by worship of famous people...It is said that the Indian Tagore will come here soon...<sup>10</sup>

The political and intellectual backgrounds of Guo's comment will be discussed in Section 4; here it is cited to indicate the general intellectual milieu of early twentieth-century China. Besides, the four visitors mentioned by Guo, that is, Dewey, Russell, Hans Driesch (1867-1941), and Tagore were those whom the Chinese Lecture Association successfully contacted before the organization ceased functioning in 1924.<sup>11</sup> Through extensive translation of their works, advertisements (or critiques) in newspapers, special numbers of magazines dedicated to their thought, seminars and publication of their lectures, the four luminaries received extensive attention in China. Interestingly, after the fad faded, Driesch was rarely mentioned by either contemporary or later researchers for reasons that are still to be confirmed; when these visitors are mentioned in studies or recollections, Dewey's and Russell's names often appear together, while Tagore is assigned to another category. For instance, in his reminiscences, Jiang Menglin 蔣夢麟 (1886-1964) specified Dewey and Russell as two indicators of the enthusiasm for learning prevalent at Peking University

---

<sup>10</sup> Guo Moruo, "Taigeer raihua de wojian" 太戈兒來華的我見 (My Opinion on Tagore's Visiting China), in *Guo Moruo quanji: Wenxue bian* 郭沫若全集·文學編 (Complete Works of Guo Moruo: Literature) (Beijing: People's Publishing House, 1990), Vol.15, p.268.

<sup>11</sup> Dewey's arrival in China in May 1919 was earlier than establishment of the Chinese Lecture Association. The Association took over the task of entertaining Dewey' later. See the two articles mentioned in note 8.

in the early 1920s.<sup>12</sup> Jiang did not refer to Tagore in the context of the May Fourth Movement, but gave a passing mention to the fact that he attended Tagore's lectures when he was a student in California.<sup>13</sup> Feng Youlan, when reviewing Chinese academia in the 1920s, states in his autobiography that "during the May Fourth era, Liang Qichao and others organized an association, inviting the American pragmatist philosopher Dewey and the British neo-realist philosopher Russell to give lectures in China."<sup>14</sup>

That Dewey and Russell always appear in pairs in the writings of Chinese scholars does not in any way indicate confusion of the two men's ideas, especially when both Jiang and Feng were Dewey's students at Columbia University. Feng even specified the different philosophical schools to which they belonged. However, on the level of cultural psychology, perhaps Jiang and Feng also shared the popular recognition that Dewey and Russell were great thinkers from the West, whereas Tagore was a poet from the East. In fact, when Tagore went to America at the end of 1920, Feng, who was then studying in New York, paid a visit to Tagore and asked his opinion about the differences between Eastern and Western civilizations. Feng translated their conversation into Chinese and submitted the record (including his personal reflections) to a Chinese journal later, which is also mentioned in his autobiography.<sup>15</sup> Generally speaking, the Eastern background of Tagore shaped his image in the eyes of Chinese intellectuals and determined the reception he was to be given in China. On an intellectual level, Tagore was a poet proposing humanistic universalism while Dewey and Russell were philosophers renowned for their systems. Thus, for some revolution-minded Chinese, who were brandishing the slogans of "science" and "democracy," Tagore's message was more controversial than those of Dewey and Russell. This intellectual estrangement was compounded by an ideological division between East and West, which made the environment even more unfavorable to Tagore. As will be demonstrated, a comparison of the three visitors' Chinese experiences provides a way for observing the cultural tension—or rather, confusion—of the May Fourth era,

---

<sup>12</sup> Jiang Menglin, *Xichao* 西潮 (Tides From the West) (Hong Kong: Chung Hwa Book Co., 2008), p.139.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p.85.

<sup>14</sup> Feng Youlan, *Sansongtang zixu* 三松堂自序 (Autobiography of the Sansong Chamber), in *Sansongtang quanji*, Vol.1, p.179.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p.173. See Chapter 6 for a thorough discussion of this conversation between Tagore and Feng.

and indicates how the leftists who ultimately rose to power in China were gaining momentum at the time.

### 5.3 Advice to China from Dewey, Russell, and Tagore

This section does not delve into the specialized theories of Dewey, Russell, and Tagore, but rather focuses on their general observations of Chinese culture and society. There are multiple reasons for this focus: firstly, both the space here and the author's expertise are limited; secondly, most Chinese in the 1920s were not familiar enough with Dewey's and Russell's philosophies to respond appropriately; thirdly, both Dewey and Russell were aiming at general methodologies and universal systems, which are not context-dependent and assume rational and objective forms. Here we touch upon the point that differentiates Dewey and Russell from Tagore; that is, although Tagore firmly upheld a cosmology—one of the “oneness of humankind and Brahma”—and proposed a “philosophy of love,” he showed an express disinterest in systematic philosophical discourse and never assumed the title of philosopher.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, as the first Nobel laureate from Asia, he felt responsible for encouraging confidence in Eastern culture,<sup>17</sup> so most of his lectures in China dwelled on the superiority of “Eastern spiritual civilization.” His audiences were hardly given access to his multifaceted talents and the social activities in which he was involved. Such a narrow focus on Tagore's part resulted in his being regarded as a blind traditionalist and made him subject to vicious criticism. Overwhelmed by this world-civilizational ideology that was shaped by a West-centric view of progress and modernity, Chinese intellectuals responded differently to Dewey's, Russell's, and Tagore's “China projects.” Ultimately, their China-related discourses, though subjective and partially-informed, contributed no less than their specialized philosophical articulation to the complexity of modern Chinese intellectual history.

Among the three visitors, Dewey went to China the earliest and spent the longest time there. He was invited to Japan in February, 1919, from where he traveled to China, arriving in Shanghai on May 1. He returned to America more than two years later, in July, 1921. Besides Jiang Menglin and Feng Youlan,

---

<sup>16</sup> Rabindranath Tagore, “Preface,” in *Sadhana: Realisation of Life*, p.vii.

<sup>17</sup> See Chapters 1 and 2 for detailed analyses.

many weighty figures in contemporary Chinese academia such as Hu Shi 胡適 (1891-1962) and Tao Xingzhi 陶行知 (1891-1946) were also Dewey's students, thus adding to his popularity in China. More importantly, Dewey's name was to be connected with modern Chinese intellectual history because three days after he arrived in the country, the May Fourth Movement broke out. Dewey watched the student-led movement closely and began exploring the tradition and future prospects of Chinese culture, which eventually turned his short-term voyage into a two-year sojourn.<sup>18</sup> Perceiving the intertwining of cultural and political factors in the May Fourth Movement and the boisterousness of the Chinese intellectual world, Dewey believed that educational reform would be the only way for China to eradicate its long-standing social diseases and facilitate modernization. After he left China, Hu Shi concluded that "what Mr. Dewey cared the most about is the reform of education; lectures on education also occupied the greatest part of his overall lectures in China."<sup>19</sup> Hu Shi went on to summarize the theory of his mentor:

Mr. Dewey did not give us any proposals for addressing any particular problems, such as communism, anarchism, freedom of love, etc. What he gave us was simply a philosophical methodology, by which we have to solve our own problems. This philosophical methodology is called "experimentalism."<sup>20</sup>

Hu Shi summarized the definition of "experimentalism" in two points, namely, the "historical method" and the "experimental method." While the former seeks to contextualize every event or concept with a view to its causation, the latter critically examines the practical effects of knowledge and ideals without adhering to authoritative opinions.<sup>21</sup> How well Hu Shi understood Dewey's philosophy has long been a subject of debate, but the summary above is

---

<sup>18</sup> Dewey made the decision to visit China when he was in Japan. Some of his former students happened to be in Japan at the time, so they sent an invitation to Dewey to give lectures in China as well. See "Duwei boshi zhi Hu Shi jiaoshu han" 杜威博士致胡適教授函 (Letter from Dr. Dewey to Professor Hu Shi), in Zhang Baogui 張寶貴 ed., *Shiyongzhuyi zhi wojian: Duwei zai Zhongguo* 實用主義之我見—杜威在中國 (Ideas of Pragmatism: Dewey in China) (Nanchang: Jiangxi Higher Education Press, 2009), p.3.

<sup>19</sup> Hu Shi, "Duwei xiansheng yu Zhongguo" 杜威先生與中國 (Mr. Dewey and China), in Ouyang Zhesheng 歐陽哲生 ed., *Hu Shi wenji* 胡適文集 (Complete Works of Hu Shi) (Beijing: Peking UP, 1998), Vol.2, p.279.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.279-280.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p.280.



generally applicable to Dewey's Chinese lectures.<sup>22</sup> As Dewey focused on real problems rather than on abstractions, many of his lectures in China were directed at issues concerning social development, such as scientific knowledge, public education, democratic politics, and industrial economics. It can be said that Dewey's ideas dovetailed with and even encouraged the pursuit of "democracy" and "science" by the May Fourth intellectuals.

To make his comments relevant, it was necessary for Dewey to develop a Chinese discourse. Arguably, his view of China and comparisons of East-West civilizations were based on the status that "science" occupies in intellectual history. Dewey claimed that the ancient Greeks had laid the foundation for objective learning in the West; although the authority of the Church prevailed for a long time, once society was galvanized during the Age of Reason, a tension between science and religion was created that lasted for centuries. Such tension was nonexistent in the East:

[T]raditional Chinese culture was more concerned with a philosophy of life than with the natural sciences, so that science never developed enough to be incorporated into the general pattern of politics, religion, and other aspects of social life...the introduction of new ways of thinking did not provoke any marked reaction...About the only thing that most people noticed was that the change brought new words into their vocabularies.<sup>23</sup>

Furthermore, due to the lack of competition of ideas and inexperience in pursuing freedom of thought under ecclesiastical social control, traditional China was not motivated towards scientific research, which for Dewey was not only materially but also morally significant, as the development of science "has introduced new hope into life, and has provided the basis for new courage in

---

<sup>22</sup> It is generally agreed that Hu Shi did not grasp the essence of Dewey's thought. What remains problematic is the degree of his understanding. See Wu Sen 吳森, "Duwei sixiang yu Zhongguo wenhua" 杜威思想與中國文化 (Dewey's Thought and Chinese Culture), in Wong Young-tsu ed., *Wusi yanjiu lunwenji*, pp.125-156 ; Zhang Baogui, "Duwei zaihua jingli" 杜威在華經歷 (Dewey's Chinese Experiences), in Zhang Baogui ed., *Dewey yu Zhongguo* 杜威與中國 (Dewey and China) (Shijiazhuang: Hebei People's Publishing House, 2001), pp.3-63.

<sup>23</sup> John Dewey, Robert W. Clopton and Tsuin-chen Ou trs., eds., *Lectures in China, 1919-1920* (Honolulu: UP of Hawaii, 1973), pp.233-234. Since not all manuscripts of Dewey's and Russell's lectures in China are available, many of the citations in this chapter are back-translated into English from Chinese records by either previous scholars or myself. Tagore, on the other hand, edited his lectures in China and published them in the 1920s.

living.”<sup>24</sup> Critically, Dewey distinguished between “science” and “the development of science,” while the latter was concerned more with “a scientific attitude,” the former was all too often confused by Oriental people with “the results of science—the development of technology.”<sup>25</sup> According to Dewey, since a scientific attitude had always existed in parallel with material exploration, the West was not, paradoxically, as inclined to polarization between the material and spiritual as was the East. Dewey further elaborated on the relationship between the material and spiritual in a pragmatic way: “The point I am going to establish is that the development of material civilization and of moral ideals and ways of thinking should go hand in hand, so that we can control material developments and direct them toward promotion of human welfare.”<sup>26</sup> Obviously, at least in the lecture on “Science and the Moral Life,” Dewey defined “spiritual” or “moral” in terms of being “non-material,” mainly addressing the mental function of rationalization, rather than of meditation or self-reflection that the term “spiritual” generally encompasses.

From the gist of Dewey’s Chinese observations presented above, we can obtain a clear idea of the origin of Hu Shi’s optimistic scientism. Such a philosophical stance has been subject to frequent criticism and revision, but that does not undermine either Dewey’s or Hu’s respective positions in intellectual history. Dewey in one of his lectures introduced three contemporary Western philosophers to his Chinese audience, one of which was Bertrand Russell, who was to visit China in October, 1920. Given the experimentalist nature of Dewey’s theory, there was not much gap between logic and life, or theory and practice. Nonetheless, in Dewey’s eyes, Russell was a thinker who embodied a temperament opposite to his: “on ethical and social matters, he shows an inclination that is radically democratic, but when it comes to theory, he is aristocratic—he worships reason and neglects feelings; he emphasizes commonality and despises individuals; he prefers reason to experiences and shows signs of a rationalist.”<sup>27</sup> Indeed, people crowded the lecture halls when

---

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p.239.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p.238.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> Duwei 杜威, “Xiandai de sange zhexuejia” 現代的三個哲學家 (Three Contemporary Philosophers), in Yuan Gang 袁剛 et al. eds., *Minzhizhuyi yu xiandaishenhui: Duwei zaihua jiangyanji* 民治主義與現代社會—杜威在華講演集 (The Principle of Government by the People and Modern Society: Collection of Dewey’s Lectures in China) (Beijing: Peking UP, 2004), p.258.

Russell was expanding on his mathematical philosophy and logic, but the theories were too sophisticated for the Chinese to digest. This situation perplexed Russell, who felt the Chinese trip had not helped him to refine his ideas: “they don’t want technical philosophy; what they want is practical advice on social reform.”<sup>28</sup> Notwithstanding the mismatch between lecturer and audience, Chinese experiences still added something to Russell’s erudition and social awareness. He left China in July, 1921. The next year, he published *The Problems of China*, which is a work of comparative studies on Chinese, Japanese, and Western cultures and modern world politics.

Generally speaking, Russell was severely critical of modern Western civilization. He addressed the welcoming party held for him in Shanghai as follows:

Reviewing the past century, it could be said that many of the fundamental ideas that dominated Europe have been far from perfect, and in fact, have actually fostered unconscionable deeds and encouraged violence and exploitation. If I were a Chinaman, I would be opposed to implementation of these European ideas in China, ideas that could set the country on a perilous track. Traditional Chinese culture, such as its literature and the arts, is indeed magnificent and worth preserving. Furthermore, as the European War has revealed to us, a terrible price must be paid in order to create a new civilization. But in China such tremendous sacrifice is not necessary since some mistakes are avoidable.<sup>29</sup>

This statement epitomizes what Russell would have to say to China in the coming ten months.<sup>30</sup> Throughout his sojourn in China and even in the

---

<sup>28</sup> Cited from Zhu Xueqin 朱學勤, “Rang ren weinan de Ruosu” 讓人為難的羅素 (An Embarrassing Russell), in Cao Yuanyong 曹元勇 ed., *Tongwang ziyou zhilu: Ruosu zai Zhongguo* 通往自由之路—羅素在中國 (The Way to Freedom: Russell in China) (Nanchang: Jiangxi Higher Education Press, 2009), p.9.

<sup>29</sup> Luosu 羅素, “Zai Shanghai qitianti huanyinghuishang de daci” 在上海七團體歡迎會上的答辭 (Address at the Welcoming Party Hosted in Shanghai by Seven Organizations), in Yuan Gang 袁剛 et al. eds., *Zhongguo dao ziyou zhilu: Ruosu zaihua jiangyanji* 中國到自由之路—羅素在華講演集 (China’s Road to Freedom: Collection of Russell’s Lectures in China) (Beijing: Peking UP, 2004), p.2. My translation.

<sup>30</sup> What follows is a condensed account of Russell’s interaction with Chinese intellectuals. For a detailed analysis, see Feng Chongyi 馮崇義, *Luosu yu Zhongguo: Xifangsixiang zai Zhongguo de yicijingli* 羅素與中國—西方思想在中國的一次經歷 (Russell and China: An

arguments of *The Problems of China*, Russell eagerly tried to persuade the Chinese to cut out a third path between wholesale Westernization and blind traditionalism. Russell expressed resentment toward both capitalism and nationalism, claiming that—in his own terms—commerce and the nation stimulate the “possessive impulse,” which is exclusive in nature, while the “creative impulse” encourages original artistic and intellectual activities and can naturally be shared.<sup>31</sup> From the perspective of comparative civilizations, Russell thought that the Chinese were far superior to Westerners in terms of seeking satisfaction and pleasure in life:

The typical Westerner wishes to be the cause of as many changes as possible in his environment; the typical Chinaman wishes to enjoy as much and as delicately as possible...We in the West make a fetish of “progress,” which is the ethical camouflage of the desire to be the cause of changes.<sup>32</sup>

Russell astutely pointed out the Western fascination with “progress.” Indeed the generalization is too rough to be precise, but it is obvious that China provided a reference for Russell to criticize Western civilization.

If Russell made his critiques as a Western elite, Tagore issued his warnings as an Eastern thinker against the modern West that he thought was plagued by materialism. To propose an “Eastern spiritual civilization,” China was an object that Tagore earnestly appealed to in view of its millennium-long cultural interaction with India. Therefore, during his short-term stay in China from April 12 to May 30, 1924, Tagore frequently reminded his audience of the cultural kinship between their countries. While Tagore showed high regard for science as a way to truth, he lamented its abuse by modern Europeans in personal, national, and racial conflicts, which turned the technologically advanced 20<sup>th</sup> century into “the darkest age in human civilization.”<sup>33</sup> For Tagore, human civilization could reach its consummation only through love,

---

Episode of Western Thought in China) (Beijing: SDX Joint Publishing Company, 1994).

<sup>31</sup> Luosu 羅素, “Shehui gaizao yuanli” 社會改造原理 (Principles of Social Reform), in *ibid.*, p.3; see also Duwei, “Xiandai de sange zhexuejia,” in Yuan Gang et al. eds., *Minzhizhuyi yu xiandai shehui: Duwei zaihua jiangyanji*, p.263.

<sup>32</sup> Bertrand Russell, *The Problem of China* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1922), p.202.

<sup>33</sup> Rabindranath Tagore, *Talks in China*, in Mohit K. Ray ed., *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore, Volume IV: Essays*, pp.748-750.

mutual help, and sacrifice. The Sino-Indian relationship that was centered upon the dissemination of Buddhism evidenced the spiritual power of love that overcame hardship and obstacles.<sup>34</sup> Despite the fact that both China and India are ancient Eastern civilizations, the former is more secular and less religious than the latter. Tagore was keenly aware of this difference, so he adroitly placed his praise for China in the dialectics between the spiritual and material, and between East and West:

I have heard it said...that you are pragmatic and materialistic; that you cling to this life and this world; that you do not send out your dreams into the air, searching the distant heavens for a far-away life beyond...I have my own idea, superstition if you like, that no people in Asia can be wholly given to materialism... Materialism is exclusive, and those who are materialistic claim their individual rights of enjoyment, of storing and possessing. You are not individualists in China. Your society is itself the creation of your communal soul...It is true that you love this world and the material things about you with an intensity of attachment, but not by enclosing your possessions within walls of exclusiveness.<sup>35</sup>

Tagore stood firmly against exclusive materialism, objecting to over-satiation of human desires and over-dependence on machines that risked trading the spiritual for power and wealth. On a political level, nevertheless, both early twentieth-century China and India were subjugated to Western imperialism, to which Tagore provided no practical advice for structural change. He encouraged the Chinese people to endure pain and tribulation; after the darkness the spirit of the East would shine all over the earth again.<sup>36</sup>

Critically, despite their different philosophical stances, the views of China held by Dewey, Russell, and Tagore all belonged to the genre of East-West civilizational discourse that was prevalent in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. In this grand narrative, the East was differentiated from the West in terms of scientific knowledge, polity of the nation-state, industrial economics, and so forth, which

---

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p.757.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.759-760.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p.750.

received different degrees of elaboration in the remarks of all three men. In brief, in the march of modernization, the factors that gave Western countries their supremacy in the modern era occupied the minds of most intellectuals around the world. The East-West dichotomy became entrenched—geographically as well as culturally—with ensuing attempts to examine, revise, suture, or transcend the division. In China, given its specific social conditions and intellectual milieu in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the issue of modernization in the context of East-West debate constituted one of the most ideologically turbulent episodes of the country's history, as will hereby be demonstrated.

#### 5.4 Foreign Visitors during the Intellectual Storm of May Fourth

Dewey, Russell, and Tagore offered advice to China based on the premise of an irreconcilable East-West dichotomy, which, from today's point of view, needs more nuanced interpretations. However, in early twentieth-century China where foreign ideas were eagerly sought after, every idea found its enthusiastic advocate and adversary among Chinese intellectuals. Hence, even though the Chinese discourse of the three luminaries does not at all represent the best of their thinking, through the responses they received from the Chinese people, a tendency towards radicalization of modern China can easily be pictured.

It is true that Dewey's thought was not properly understood by the Chinese people, but, at any rate, nothing he said caused much controversy, either. Just as Hu Shi indicated, Dewey said nothing about "isms," but spoke only of methodology; furthermore, Dewey was himself a strong supporter of democracy and science, for which most Chinese intellectuals were searching. Hence, despite some articles that question the premises or logical foundation of experimentalism,<sup>37</sup> Dewey did not become the center of any fierce polemics. Nevertheless, at the early stage of Dewey's sojourn in China, there was a disputation tangentially relevant to Dewey that was significant in intellectual history, that is, the famous "debate between questions and isms." The episode began with a brief essay by Hu Shi, "Study Questions More; Talk Less about

---

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Zhang Shuiqi 張水淇, "Zhishi guoshi gongju ma?" 知識果是工具麼 (Is Knowledge Really a Tool?), in Zhang Baogui, ed., *Shiyongzhuyi zhi wojian: Duwei zai Zhongguo*, pp.101-103; Zhu Yanjun 朱言均, "Bo shiyanzhuyi" 駁實驗主義 (Rebutting Experimentalism), in *ibid.*, pp.104-107. It should be noted that what these two articles argue against is Hu Shi's interpretation of experimentalism, which might not be in accordance with Dewey's theory.

Isms.” Hu Shi did not advocate experimentalism in this article, yet his exposition of the formulation of thought is no different from his summary of Dewey’s philosophy:

The first step in formulating thought is to study the many facts related to a question, seeing what problems are encountered. The second step is to...figure out different kinds of solutions to those problems according to the experiences and learning gained in one’s life. Based on life-long experiences and learning, with the help of imagination...the third step is to reason out every possible hypothetical solution, and then choose one of the hypothetical solutions to be one’s own proposal. All proposals of any value come from these three steps.<sup>38</sup>

Hu Shi’s article elicited two responses that either repudiated or tried to complement his view. One was “Questions and Isms” by Lan Gongwu 藍公武 (1887-1957), the other was “Questions and Isms II” by Li Dazhao. In “Questions and Isms III,” Hu Shi summarized the main points of the two articles by Lan and Li, respectively: “There is one point shared by Mr. Lan and Mr. Li, that is, they both say that an ‘ism’ is ‘a common ideal’ (Li), ‘a standard of actions followed by most people, or a common attitude towards a certain specific question’ (Lan). Such a definition is not in contradiction with what I explained in the original essay...”<sup>39</sup> It is not necessary to go into the details of their debate, but what is noteworthy is that Li Dazhao concluded his article from the perspective of Marxism, arguing that while the materialistic view of history, whose core thesis is economic determinism, reveals the truth of the development of human society, the “common ideal” of socialism cannot be achieved without the help of class struggle.<sup>40</sup> On this point, Hu Shi made his counterargument in “Questions and Isms: IV”:

The theory of class struggle demonstrates the reasons for which the bourgeoisie cannot coexist with the proletariat, which is quite

---

<sup>38</sup> Hu Shi, “Duo yanjiu xie wenti, shao tan xie zhuyi” 多研究些問題，少談些主義 (Study Questions More; Talk Less about Isms). In Ouyang Zhesheng ed., *Hu Shi wenji*, Vol.2, p.252.

<sup>39</sup> Hu Shi, “Sanlun wenti yu zhuyi” 三論問題與主義 (Questions and Isms: III), in Ouyang Zhesheng ed., *Hu Shi wenji*, Vol.2, p.266.

<sup>40</sup> Li Dazhao, “Zailun wenti yu zhuyi” 再論問題與主義 (Questions and Isms: II), in Ouyang Zhesheng ed., *Hu Shi wenji*, Vol.2, pp.265-266.

significant in the history of socialism and the Labor Party. This type of theory, however, overemphasizes “class consciousness” and fosters hostility between classes. It encourages an uncompromising hatred of labor to capital, and makes capitalists feel that labor is a real enemy.<sup>41</sup>

Hu Shi was criticizing the negative effects of “isms” and “ideology.” Ideas that undergo radicalization and absolutization bear no resemblance to the “historical attitude” proposed by Hu Shi that seeks to judge everything in terms of cause and effect.<sup>42</sup> If the argument between experimentalism and Marxism is not so obvious in the above articles, Qu Qiubai 瞿秋白 (1899-1935) challenged experimentalism directly for its dwelling on methodology without making any claims for truth. For Qu, only Marx’s view of dialectical historical materialism grasps the objective principles of the world, which “can change society thoroughly, rather than be satisfied with the dispensation of trivial problems.”<sup>43</sup>

As specified in the previous section, at the welcoming party upon his arrival, Russell warned China against total Westernization and encouraged the Chinese people to preserve whatever was fine and excellent in their tradition. This comment was nothing less than natural for such a relentless critic of Western politics and economics as Russell. On the other hand, Russell might have wanted to be complimentary to his host out of courtesy. But this brief comment immediately evoked criticism. The newspaper *Shen Bao* published “A Report on Dr. Russell’s Welcome by Many Institutions” the next morning (October 14, 1920), which bears the subtitle, “Dr. Russell Said that China Should Preserve Its National Essence.”<sup>44</sup> Zhou Zuoren 周作人 (1885-1967) responded in the newspaper, *Chen Bao*, five days later, claiming that the great tradition of China was already dead without the tiniest “essence” being left. At the end of the article he asserted that “we welcome Russell’s opinions on social

---

<sup>41</sup> Hu Shi, “Silun wenti yu zhuyi” 四論問題與主義 (Questions and Isms: IV), in Ouyang Zhesheng ed., *Hu Shi wenji*, Vol.2, p.277.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p.277-278.

<sup>43</sup> Qu Qiubai, “Shiyan zhuyi yu geming zhexue” 實驗主義與革命哲學 (Experimentalism and the Philosophy of Revolution), in *Qu Qiubai wenji: zhengzhilun bian* 瞿秋白文集·政治理論編 (Complete Works of Qu Qiubai: Political Theories) (Beijing: People’s Publishing House, 1987), Vol.2, p.627.

<sup>44</sup> “Ge tuanti huanying Ruosu boshi ji: Luo boshi yan Zhongguo yi baocun guoyou guocui” 各團體歡迎羅素博士記—羅博士言中國宜保存固有國粹 (A Report on Dr. Russell Welcome by Many Institutions: Dr. Russell Said that China Should Preserve Its National Essence), in Cao Yuanyong ed., *Tongwang ziyou zhilu: Ruosu zai Zhongguo*, p.12.



reform; this is our only request of him.”<sup>45</sup> Such a request testified to the sense of powerlessness that gripped Russell later: he complained that the Chinese showed no interest in his logical analyses but asked only for prescripts for social reform. Actually, a glance through some relevant discussions indicates that not all commentators were ready anti-traditionalists, yet they were quite sensitive to the proposal to “preserve national essence,” which they thought was a sign of resurgence of the traditionalists who had just lost the “debate on East-West civilizations.” Apparently, Russell had inadvertently become involved in the ideological vortex of early twentieth-century China. As will be demonstrated, among anti-traditionalists, the leftists were the force that was rising the most rapidly.

In his farewell address Russell concluded: “There is one question which I find on the lips of almost all the thoughtful Chinese whom I have met and that is the question: ‘How can we develop industry without at the same time developing capitalism and all its evils?’”<sup>46</sup> This is further evidence of the intellectual orientation during the May Fourth era, which invariably concentrated on practical issues and showed the increasing influence of Marxism. Russell was sympathetic to Bolshevism, although not without reservations. In one of his lectures, he highly praised the social system that, at least in theory, claims to abolish all classes.<sup>47</sup> Such a stance irritated the incumbent Beijing government, which even sought to expel Russell from the country. In response to the practical question raised above, Russell’s idea was that development of industry should be based on a reliable government, which in turn is premised upon a well-educated people; both qualifications were absent in early twentieth-century China. Hence, he suggested that China consider Soviet-style “State Socialism,” which pushes the advancement of industry and education through governmental direction.

State Socialism has grave drawbacks, and in an undeveloped country

---

<sup>45</sup> Zhou Zuoren, “Ruosu yu guocui” 羅素與國粹 (Russell and National Essence), in Zhong Shuhe 鍾叔河 ed., *Zhou Zuoren sanwen quanji* 周作人散文全集 (Complete Essays of Zhou Zuoren) (Guilin: Guangxi Normal UP, 2009), Vol.2, p.251.

<sup>46</sup> Bertrand Russell, “China’s Road to Freedom,” in Richard A. Rempel et al. eds., *The Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell 15: Uncertain Paths to Freedom: Russia and China, 1919-22* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), p.265.

<sup>47</sup> Luosu, “Buershiweike di sixiang” 布爾什維克底思想 (Thought of the Bolsheviks), in Yuan Gang et al. eds., *Zhongguo dao ziyou zhili: Ruosu zaihua jiangyanji*, pp.203-207.

reproduces many of the evils of capitalism. But I believe it is easier to pass from it to a better system, when industrial and educational progress makes it possible, than it is to eradicate capitalism when once it has acquired the hold it has in England and America.<sup>48</sup>

Despite his preference for state socialism, Russell warned China against the bureaucratic tyranny and fervent desire for power that were visible in the Soviet Union. Moreover, he did not agree with economic determinism and thought that ethics was at least as significant as economic factors in making a sound country.<sup>49</sup> Obviously, the socialism proposed by Russell was mixed; it bore a tint of liberalism and was tinged with moralism. This was different from the radical views held by Chinese intellectuals, and thus incited disagreement. For instance, Qu Qiubai criticized Russell's socialist ideas as incomplete:

There are not a few brilliant points in Russell's lectures. But he is so misled that he assumes what the Bolsheviks want to create is merely national socialism, or national capitalism. This is a great fallacy. Furthermore, while he admits that the national capitalism that is currently being implemented in Russia is for the good of the masses and society, he denies the necessity for revolution.<sup>50</sup>

This ideological chasm found expression in a forum in the magazine *La Jeunesse*, which is entitled "Discussions on Socialism."<sup>51</sup> In view of the extreme poverty suffered by the Chinese hinterland, Zhang Dongsun 張東蓀 (1886-1973) proposed gradual social change and referred to Russell as the source of his opinion:

*He seems to have said that* China must first focus on education, helping those without knowledge become knowledgeable, and making

---

<sup>48</sup> Bertrand Russell, "China's Road to Freedom," in Richard A. Rempel et al. eds., *The Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell 15: Uncertain Paths to Freedom: Russia and China, 1919-22*, p.266.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> Qu Qiubai, "Ping Ruosu zhi shehuizhuyiguan" 評羅素之社會主義觀 (Comment on Russell's View of Socialism), in *Qu Qiubai wenji: zhengzhilun bian*, Vol.1, p.510.

<sup>51</sup> Zhang Dongsun et al., "Guanyu shehuizhuyi de taolun" 關於社會主義的討論 (Discussions on Socialism), in *Xinqingnian* 新青年 (*La Jeunesse*), Vol.8, No.4 (December, 1920), pp.1-24.

those who are already knowledgeable more advanced in knowledge. The second priority is to develop industry to satisfy material needs. There is no harm in postponing the practice of socialism.<sup>52</sup>

Russell's original speech is not available now, and Zhang Dongsun employed ambiguity in his paraphrase, which implies the possibility of garbling. In any case, the non-radical stance of Russell dissatisfied Chen Duxiu, who wrote an open letter to Russell, asking him to clarify his ideas, "so that you may not mislead the Chinese people, and that progressive-minded Chinese would not feel disappointed with you."<sup>53</sup> This dispute was centered around Russell's words, but what was under debate remained unchanged: whether China should develop capitalism and industrialize itself first, or if it could bypass this phase and go directly to socialism. In other words, what Russell had said did not really matter; his words were mere pretexts for the ideological rift between contemporary Chinese intellectuals.

Speaking of debate, no other foreign visitor to China was involved in a bigger storm than Tagore. As mentioned, Zhou Zuoren was antipathetic to Russell's suggestion of "preserving national essence." He even pointed a dagger at Tagore:

Why do the Chinese like the Indian Tagore? Because he praises Easternization over Westernization. Why are the Chinese delighted when it comes to "national essence" or Easternization? Because we are lazy. We are afraid of using our minds and of changing our way of life.<sup>54</sup>

This article was written in October, 1920, three and a half years earlier than Tagore's visit to China, an indication that Tagore's identity as the "spokesperson for Eastern culture" had already become widespread in Chinese cultural circles. Zhou Zuoren said that "we welcome Russell's opinions on social reform; this is our only request of him." Remotely echoing this criticism, the leftist writer Mao Dun 茅盾 (Shen Yanbin 沈雁冰, 1896-1981), wrote a

---

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.7-8. My italics.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p.8.

<sup>54</sup> See note 45.

comment on the very day Tagore arrived in China: “We are resolutely against the Tagore who praises Eastern culture...What we welcome is the Tagore who involves himself in peasant movements (although the way he sponsors peasant movements is not what we approve of), the Tagore who sings ‘follow the light!’”<sup>55</sup> Apparently, what Tagore faced in China was an audience that had experienced the fierce “debate on East-West cultures.” Furthermore, on the eve of his arrival, the curtain of the “debate between science and philosophy of life” had just fallen, which resulted in Zhang Junmai 張君勱 (1887-1969) and Liang Qichao—those who did not believe that the problems of human existence could be fully solved through scientific methods—being ridiculed as “metaphysical devils” (玄學鬼). Since Tagore was invited by the Chinese Lecture Association, people tended to think that Liang Qichao and his comrades sought to rally again by way of Tagore’s international reputation. Zhou Zuoren in another essay also pointed out: “I think we should show hospitality to Tagore, but it is not right to peddle metaphysics through the old man.”<sup>56</sup> Temporally speaking, Liang Qichao’s invitation to Tagore predated the debate, so it was wrong to accuse him of trying to use Tagore. Hu Shi, although a supporter of scientism, also objectively defended Liang’s innocence.<sup>57</sup> Nonetheless, things were more complicated than Liang Qichao’s attitude as criticisms of Tagore came not only from one party or clique but virtually from all directions.

As mentioned in Section 2, Guo Moruo made a sarcastic remark at Tagore’s impending visit to China. Guo admitted that, during his student days in Japan, he was so fascinated with Tagore’s poetry that he tried to imitate the style. But by the end of 1923 when the comment was made, Guo had already become a leftist who not merely criticized the spiritual ideal of the East but also emphasized:

I believe historical materialism is the only way that can lead to the solution of world problems. Without reform of economic systems,

---

<sup>55</sup> Shen Yanbin, “Duiyu Taigeer de xiwang” 對於太戈爾的希望 (My Expectations of Tagore), in *Mao Dun quanji* 茅盾全集 (Complete Works of Mao Dun) (Beijing: People’s Publishing House, 1989), Vol.18, p.424.

<sup>56</sup> Zhou Zuoren, “Daren zhi weihai’ ji qita” 「大人之危害」及其他 (“Danger of the Giant” and Others), in Zhong Shuhe ed., *Zhou Zuoren sanwen quanji*, Vol.3, p.403.

<sup>57</sup> “Taigeer zaijing zuihou zhi jiangyan” 泰戈爾在京最後之講演 (Tagore’s Last Speech in Beijing), in Sun Yixue 孫宜學 ed., *Shiren de jingshen: Taigeer zai Zhongguo* 詩人的精神—泰戈爾在中國 (Spirit of the Poet: Tagore in China) (Nanchang: Jiangxi Higher Education Press, 2009), p.64.

slogans such as the reality of Brahma, self-dignity, and the gospel of love are nothing more than the opiate of the propertied and leisurely bourgeoisie; the proletariat has no alternative but to sweat and bleed to the end.<sup>58</sup>

Guo Moruo's criticism was relatively moderate. Qu Qiubai went further to call Tagore "a man of the past" because he was not interested in social revolution.<sup>59</sup> Among the leftists, Chen Duxiu launched the fiercest attack on Tagore. Chen was a pioneer of the pro-Westernization faction in the "debate on East-West cultures;" he was also the first to juxtapose "democracy" and "science" for modern China as the country's two objectives. Therefore, nearly everything Tagore proposed, such as Eastern civilization and anti-materialism, ran counter to Chen Duxiu's agenda. Chen published around a dozen articles criticizing Tagore, many of which are not much different from slander.<sup>60</sup>

The leftists were not the only ones who reviled Tagore, however. The extreme rightist Wu Zhihui 吳稚暉 (1865-1953) also warned that "Mr. Tagore, you just write your poems. Other countries are not your business. Don't talk about world affairs!"<sup>61</sup> Wu continued sarcastically that "our great writer Liang Qichao was championing such a poor and despicable theory of Easternization and Westernization five years ago. As the proverb goes, 'great minds think alike.'"<sup>62</sup> Wu was referring to Liang Qichao's *Record of Reflections during the European Trip* (see Section 2). Even such moderates as Lin Yutang 林語堂 (1895-1976) also turned cynical towards Tagore: "When one lives in a ruined country, it is quite natural that (s)he would feel subdued and depressed...if (s)he is unable, or unwilling, to embark on assassination, revolution, passive protest, or constitutional reform, then a final, boring alternative would be spiritual consolation!"<sup>63</sup> Historically speaking, while Tagore's message might have had

---

<sup>58</sup> Guo Moruo, "Taigeer raihua de wojian," in *Guo Moruo quanji: Wenxue bian*, Vol.15, p.272.

<sup>59</sup> Qu Qiubai, "Guoqu de ren: Taigeer" 過去的人—太戈爾 (Tagore, a Man of the Past), in *Qu Qiubai wenji: wenxue bian* 瞿秋白文集·文學編 (Complete Works of Qu Qiubai: Literature) (Beijing: People's Publishing House, 1987), Vol.1, pp.331-334.

<sup>60</sup> Cf. Ai Dan 艾丹, *Taigeer yu wusishiqi de shixiangwenhua lunzheng* 泰戈爾與五四時期的思想文化論爭 (Debating and Discussing: Tagore and China) (sic.) (Beijing: People's Publishing House, 2010), pp.154-170. Interestingly, Chen Duxiu was also the earliest one who introduced Tagore's poetry to China.

<sup>61</sup> Wu Zhihui, "Wangao Taigeer" 婉告太戈爾 (Admonitions to Tagore), in Sun Yixue ed., *Shiren de jingshen: Taigeer zai Zhongguo*, p.251.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p.252.

<sup>63</sup> Lin Yutang, "Yige yanjiu wenxueshi de ren duiyu Guitui gai zenyangxiang ne?" 一個研究

healing power for a Europe ravaged by WWI, it could do very little to help China avoid imminent collapse, due to both internal and external pressures, in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

From the examples above, it is clear that the criticisms of Tagore made by Chinese intellectuals were totally different in nature from their criticisms of Dewey and Russell. While explanations of this difference will be given later, here a common fact must be pointed out: that is, despite the alleged character of the Renaissance or the Enlightenment, China during the May Fourth era did not have genuine interest in fundamental theories or principles on the whole. Chinese intellectuals tended to judge complicated ideas according to political criteria, so the three visitors were all more or less involved in disputations of different scales. Furthermore, during the period from Dewey's arrival in 1919 to Tagore's departure in 1924, Chinese society was overwhelmed by ideologies, with the leftists gaining the strongest momentum. This tendency is well exemplified in the two introductions to the collection of polemic essays, "Science and the Philosophy of Life," by Hu Shi and Chen Duxiu, respectively (the "debate between science and the philosophy of life" took place in 1923). Hu Shi adhered to his optimism that scientific methodology could lead to a thorough understanding of human psychology; Chen Duxiu went further to claim that all philosophies of life were mere products of socio-economic environments, with which Hu did not agree. Thus Hu and Chen also traded fire in their introductions to the volume.<sup>64</sup>

### 5.5 Ripples in May Fourth Intellectual Trends

As explicated earlier, this chapter focuses on the civilizational discourse of Dewey, Russell, and Tagore without elaborating on their philosophies. As for the responses they received from China, only the debates they aroused are treated here, with the myriad introductions, acclamations, and analyses being omitted. Such a focus allows us to discern major tendencies in the Chinese intellectual world during the May Fourth era. As Lin Yu-sheng 林毓生 claims:

---

文學史的人對於貴推該怎樣想呢 (How Should a Scholar of Literary History Think about Goethe?), in Sun Yixue ed., *Shiren de jingshen: Taigeer zai Zhongguo*, p.287.

<sup>64</sup> For Chen's and Hu's introductions, see Zhang Junmai, Ding Wenjiang 丁文江 et al., *Kexue yu renshengguan* 科學與人生觀 (Science of the Philosophy of Life) (Jinan: Shandong People's Publishing House, 1997), pp.1-8, 9-25. Hu Shi wrote another response to Chen Duxiu, see pp.26-28; Chen also replied to Hu, see pp.28-32.

What was the May Fourth spirit? It was a sense of mission towards world affairs that was specific to Chinese intellectuals...Its fundamental objective was to make the country strong and wealthy...The May Fourth Movement was a patriotic movement guided by the principles of reason, humanity, and development of a rich civilization, so it was inseparable from the pursuit of freedom, democracy, rule of law, and science....The substance of May Fourth thought, however, failed to detach itself from the monistic mode of thinking of traditional China, which was responsible for the formalistic total rejection of tradition.<sup>65</sup>

Bearing a sense of mission towards the world to achieve the objectives of freedom, democracy, rule of law, and science, May Fourth intellectuals were so paradoxically influenced by the monistic thinking deep-rooted in the Chinese psyche that they sided with a wholesale rejection of tradition.<sup>66</sup> Politically, living in a country devastated by both domestic struggles and imperialist exploitation, witnessing the collapse of the capitalist social order of Western Europe and being encouraged by the success of the Soviet Revolution, many young Chinese turned resolutely to Marxism, which claimed for itself a status of scientific truth. As a result, Chinese youth brandished Marxism to break with tradition. This sharp turn in modern Chinese thought—arguably the country’s most significant—is a topic that has been studied extensively. What is relevant to this chapter is that the “tradition” that May Fourth intellectuals rejected was an abstract idea, which means their target of criticism was not limited to China, but included all non-modern Western cultures. To cite Chen Duxiu’s comment: “Because Eastern people are so accustomed to... a pacifism that is suitable to slaves, the Indians and Malays are still living a life whereby they eat with one hand and wipe excrement with the other; and the Chinese feel gratified for alternate subjugations by armies and bandits; all Asian nations have endured

---

<sup>65</sup> Lin Yu-sheng, “Wusi fanchuantong sixiang yu Zhongguo yishi de weiji” 五四式反傳統思想與中國意識的危機 (The Crisis of Chinese Consciousness: Iconoclasm in the May Fourth Era), in *Sixiang yu renwu* 思想與人物 (Ideas and Persons) (Taipei: Linking Publishing, 1983), pp.122-124.

<sup>66</sup> See Lin Yu-sheng, “Wusi shidai de jilie fanchuantong sixiang yu Zhongguo ziyoushuizhi de qiantu” 五四時代的激烈反傳統思想與中國自由主義的前途 (Anti-traditionalism during the May Fourth Era and the Future Prospects of Liberalism in China), in *ibid.*, pp.139-196.

the exploitation of Britain, America, the Netherlands, and France without much agitation.”<sup>67</sup> This remark gives us a clear understanding why Tagore was the most criticized among the three luminaries, and why the leftists were the most vigorous in such criticisms.

First of all, Tagore repeatedly claimed to be a poet who came to China for a spiritual bond, a theme that would definitely not appeal to most May Fourth intellectuals. Secondly, Tagore came from an India under British rule but hailed a spiritual civilization while bearing Western laurels, which inevitably seemed paradoxical or even absurd to the Chinese people, who were eager to save their country from collapse.<sup>68</sup> Given this stereotype of Tagore as traditionalist or spiritualist, some of his Chinese friends urged him to relate to audiences his deep involvement in Bengali social movements. Accordingly, in one of his lectures in Beijing, Tagore gave an account of how his family had participated in the three major movements—religious, literary, and political—of the Bengal region since the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Tagore said: “Almost from my boyhood I have been accustomed to hear[ing] from my own countrymen angry remonstrances that I was too crassly modern...For your people I am obsolete, and therefore useless...”<sup>69</sup> The latter half of the remark finds excellent testimony in Shen Zemin’s 沈澤民 (1900-1933, a younger brother of Shen Yanbin) comment:

In India, Tagore has already become a stubborn conservative. By this term I don’t mean that Tagore is the counterpart of our Gu Hongming [辜鴻銘, 1857-1928] or Kang Youwei [康有為, 1858-1927]; but he is at least a Liang Qichao or Zhang Junmai in India. In the “debate between metaphysics and science” [i.e. the debate between science and the philosophy of life], Zhang Junmai made clear his metaphysical stance and asserted independence of spirit. Tagore goes even further; he believes in the existence of God.<sup>70</sup>

---

<sup>67</sup> Chen Duxiu, “Taigeer yu dongfang wenhua” 太戈爾與東方文化 (Tagore and Eastern Culture), in Ren Jianshu et al. eds., *Chen Duxiu zhuzuoxuan*, Vol.2, p.657.

<sup>68</sup> Actually, Tagore’s mysticism alienated Russell as well. See Krishna Dutta and Andrew Robinson, *Rabindranath Tagore: The Myriad-Minded Man*, pp.175-178.

<sup>69</sup> Rabindranath Tagore, *Talks in China*, in Mohit K. Ray ed., *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore, Volume IV: Essays*, p.773.

<sup>70</sup> Shen Zemin, “Taigeer yu Zhongguo qingnian” 泰戈爾與中國青年 (Tagore and Chinese Youths), in Shen Yihong 沈益洪 ed., *Taigeer tan Zhongguo* 泰戈爾談中國 (Tagore on China) (Hangzhou: Zhejiang Literary Press, 2001), pp.154-155.



In fact, Tagore has long been known as a revolutionist in India for his groundbreaking contributions to literature, painting, songwriting, social criticism, and educational reform. But the problem is that Tagore earned his reputation from a West that was becoming anti-war and anti-science, which found consolation in Tagore the spiritualist rather than Tagore the Renaissance man. It was a time when Western influence on China had reached an unprecedented intensity, so such a biased image of Tagore in the West was also shared by the Chinese. Very few people bothered to understand Tagore's life experiences, even fewer (perhaps none) were able to appreciate Tagore's talents in the Bengali language.

In contrast, as Western thinkers, Dewey and Russell found ready acceptance in China. While the best of their theories were beyond the grasp of most contemporary Chinese, their observations and political views on China elicited much discussion, with the strongest opinions issuing from the leftists. Even Jiang Menglin, Dewey's former student, ignored Russell's elaboration of mathematical logic and concluded: "Russell inspired interest in our youth in the principles of social evolution. Further studies of these principles of evolution made them oppose religion and imperialism at the same time."<sup>71</sup> However large an audience Dewey and Russell attracted, what ensued was radicalization of Chinese youth quite apart from any influence Dewey and Russell might have had, as is well recapitulated by Li Zehou 李澤厚:

The macro trend mattered more than individual influences. Although Dewey and Russell came to China and their lectures caused a sensation, our impatient and progressive-minded youth were more agitated by the simplistic and superficial knowledge of Marxism that had been introduced to them; they established or joined the Chinese Communist Party, marching towards factories, mines, and rural villages, putting into practice the doctrine of "class struggle."<sup>72</sup>

Of course, there were other responses, some quite friendly and intellectual, to these notable foreign figures. For example, Liang Shuming 梁漱溟

---

<sup>71</sup> Jiang Menglin, *Xichao*, p.140.

<sup>72</sup> Li Zehou, "Qimeng yu jiuwang de shuangchong bianzou" in *On the Intellectual History of Modern China*, p.24.

(1893-1988) examines the terms of “creative impulse” and “possessive impulse” coined by Russell in his *East-West Cultures and Their Philosophies*, expanding on the “philosophy of love” advocated by Tagore and comparing it to Confucian thought;<sup>73</sup> the romantic poet Xu Zhimo 徐志摩 (1897-1931) described Russell’s penetrating views and words as lightning and thunderbolts and Tagore’s personality as the “sunrise on Mount Tai;”<sup>74</sup> Liang Qichao compared both Dewey and Tagore to the great Buddhist monk Kumārajīva (334-413) who went to China more than a millennium earlier.<sup>75</sup> Hu Shi’s admiration for Dewey needs no further explanation. Although he did not favor Tagore’s thesis of Eastern civilization, he highly praised Tagore’s achievements in revolutionizing Bengali literature, as Hu himself pioneered the vernacular Chinese movement in the 1910s.<sup>76</sup>

Among the aforementioned persons, both Liang Qichao and Hu Shi held considerable social sway, but their views did not become the mainstream. To sum up, after the May Fourth Movement, the tendency of “focusing on ‘saving the country’ rather than ‘enlightening’” (救亡壓倒啓蒙),<sup>77</sup> namely, the preference for revolutionary rather than educational projects, seems to have been well reflected by Chinese attitudes towards famous foreign visitors.

A final point here. In the context of world politics in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, when Dewey, Russell, and Tagore spoke of Chinese culture, they often referred to Japan in conjunction with the West as an example of a successful, modernized country east of China. One of the main differences between their lectures in China and Japan was the adoption of “Asia” as a cognitive or analytical category. In China, Dewey and Russell rarely referred to “Asia” in recognizing China’s distinct civilization and its modern predicament. A broad East-West framework

---

<sup>73</sup> Liang Shuming, *Dongxi wenhua jiqi zhexue* 東西文化及其哲學 (East-West Cultures and Their Philosophies) (Taipei: Taiwan Commercial Press, 2002), pp.227-230, 233-234.

<sup>74</sup> Xu Zhimo, “Ruosu youlai shuohua le” 羅素又來說話了 (Russell Comes to Speak Again), in *Xu Zhimo quanji* 徐志摩全集 (Complete Works of Xu Zhimo) (Tianjin: Tianjin People’s Publishing House, 2005), Vol.1, pp.364-374; “Taishan richu” 泰山日出 (Sunrise on Mount Tai), in *ibid.*, pp.311-313.

<sup>75</sup> “Wutuantong gongjian Duwei xishang zhi yanlun” 五團體公餞杜威席上之言論 (Address at the Farewell Party for Dewey Co-hosted by Five Institutions), in Zhang Baogui, *Shiyongzhuyi zhi wojian: Duwei zai Zhongguo*, p.21; Liang Qichao, “Indu yu Zhongguowenhua zhi qinshude guanxi” 印度與中國文化之親屬的關係 (Kinship between Indian and Chinese Cultures), in *Yinbingshi heji*, *Wenji*, no.41, p.46.

<sup>76</sup> “Taigeer zaijing zuihou zhi jiangyan,” in Sun Yixue ed., *Shiren de jingshen: Taigeer zai Zhongguo*, p.65; Hu Shi, “Zhuiyi Taigeer zai Zhongguo” 追憶太戈爾在中國 (Remembering Tagore in China), in Ouyang Zhesheng ed., *Hu Shi wenji*, Vol.7, p.626.

<sup>77</sup> Also see Li Zehou, “Qimeng yu jiuwang de shuangchong bianzou,” in *Xiandai Zhongguo sixiang shilun*, pp.1-46.

sufficed for their arguments. In Japan, however, the term “Asia” frequently appeared in their discourse. Historically speaking, what Dewey and Russell were addressing in the late 1910s and early 1920s was a Japan that had emerged victorious from WWI and become the leading non-Western country on the world stage. The notion of pan-Asianism was rapidly gaining credence in Japan—in contrast to the country’s previous policy of “leave Asia, enter Europe” (脱亜入欧)—to seek unification of Asia against Western hegemony. Dewey and Russell were not necessarily aware of the historical details, but their reference to “Asia” followed in a similar ideological vein. Being unable to deny the geographical fact that both China and Japan are Eastern countries, as shown in Chapter 3, Dewey and Russell simply denied Japan an Asian character by defining such a character as mainly continental. By making this distinction, both philosophers found it easier to explain Japan’s imperialism, and focused their generalizations of Eastern civilization on the eastern part of Eurasia. Simply put, inclusion or exclusion of Japan from the category of “Asia” was essentially a conceptual manipulation, much more so than the “East” was a category of real geographical meaning. This issue was further complicated by Tagore. As a fervent protagonist in Asian unity, Japan was indispensable to Tagore’s civilizational map as it was the only country able to prove that the East was capable of self-transformation into modernity. To dovetail his discourse with reality, Tagore reproached Japan’s foreign aggression but regarded it as an evil based on the modern Western model, which could only be tamed by the humanistic spirit of the ancient East (represented by China and India). Needless to say, Tagore’s grand narrative is theoretically shaky and his effort to solve its contradictions was never satisfactory. Nevertheless, by contextualizing both “the East” and “Asia” as a non-Western paradigm, Tagore’s rather wishful civilizational vision made clear one critical point: what underlay the issue of Chinese or Japanese or Eastern or Asian identity was the challenge of West-centric modernity. Many of the previous chapters have touched upon this issue; theoretical discussions will be found in the two chapters in Part IV.

## 6. “Tagore and China” Reconsidered: Starting from a Conversation with Feng Youlan

### 6.1 Reflection upon Studies on “Tagore and China”

2011 was the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of Rabindranath Tagore. To celebrate this cultural event, the Indian government, as well as organizations all over the world, has hosted a considerable number of activities in the past few years, hoping to disseminate the artistic and intellectual legacies Tagore left to us.

Rabindranath Tagore was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1913, after which he received numerous invitations from many countries and embarked on a life of lecturing around the world. As India was under British colonial rule, and WWI caused unprecedented damage to human society, one of the fundamental themes of Tagore’s lectures was to propose the spiritual civilization of the East as a remedy to the collapsing materialistic civilization of the West. In view of this history, when academics around the world celebrated the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Tagore nearly a century later, a frequent focus was on Tagore’s ideal of Asia, especially on the similarities and differences between the revival of Asian cultures Tagore predicted in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and the rise of Asia in the age of globalization.

In China, Tagore studies also reached a peak in 2011. A review of relevant studies in the past hundred years shows that there are several phases in this field. First of all, Tagore’s name became widely known to the Chinese after he received the Nobel Prize in 1913. Introduction to him and translations of his works began in a fragmentary manner.<sup>1</sup> These preparatory works paved the way for Tagore studies to gain momentum in the 1920s, and reached a climax when Tagore visited China in 1924. However, Tagore’s lectures on spiritual civilization displeased many anti-traditionalists and pro-Westernization activists, thus involving him unwittingly in a cultural debate that began in the late 1910s in China. Under the circumstances, both parties for and against

---

<sup>1</sup> Many scholars point out that the first article introducing Tagore to the Chinese people appeared in 1913, which was “Tagore’s View of Life” by Qian Zhixiu published in *The Eastern Miscellany*. In 1915, Chen Duxiu translated four poems from *Gitanjali* and published them in *La Jeunesse*.

Tagore issued emotional remarks that obstructed a clear understanding of the Indian poet thinker. Furthermore, since China was devastated by foreign imperialist exploitation and by a struggle for power between warlords domestically, very little interest was shown in Tagore after his trip, not to mention any systematic research. With normalization of the relationship between China and India, and several visits by Zhou Enlai 周恩來 (1898-1976) to the latter in the 1950s, Tagore as a pioneer of cultural interaction between modern China and India came into the limelight again. In 1961, while Tagore's 100<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary was being celebrated, there arose another "Tagore fever" in Chinese academia and the press. Since the end of the Cultural Revolution in 1976, there has been a veritable stream of Tagore studies. However, it was not until the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century that the frequency of related discussions increased. This new interest is attributable to the endeavor of contemporary Chinese scholars to reevaluate significant cultural events and intellectual resources in the modern era. Nevertheless, as mentioned above, it is the rise of China and India and the problems of cultural interaction involved in the bilateral relationship that are the principal causes of the rekindling of fervor for Tagore studies in China.

After a brief review of studies on Tagore in China, a critical conclusion must be drawn—which also constitutes the core issue of this chapter—that they have not belonged to the field of "Tagore studies" in the strict sense. Instead, they can be better categorized as branches of "Chinese studies," such as "Tagore and China" and a relevant topic of "cultural interaction between China and India." Accordingly, those discussions come closer to cultural history, with intellectual issues drawing less attention. While not preventing Chinese scholars from attaining in-depth understanding of Tagore's thought, this orientation of research is rooted in an intriguing fact: the mode of interpreting Tagore by Chinese intellectuals has been largely based on the message he sent to China in 1924. That is to say, when Tagore spoke to Chinese audiences and proposed an idealized Eastern civilization, what he repeated time and again was that Chinese culture is fundamentally humane and that cultural interaction between China and India had existed for millennia. Therefore, during the process in which Tagore propagandized "the East," he "Easternized" or even

“provincialized” his own image.<sup>2</sup> A more comprehensive grasp of Tagore’s life activities—literature, music, painting, religion, philosophy, education, politics, village reformation, etc.—and close reading of Tagore’s conversations with prominent Western intellectuals show how immense and inspiring his thought is. For example, a biography published in 1995, *Rabindranath Tagore: The Myriad-Minded Man*, lays great stress on the versatility of Tagore’s mind.<sup>3</sup> Nonetheless, owing to many environmental and personal factors, Tagore restricted his speeches in China to certain topics,<sup>4</sup> which gave rise to an unfortunate result: “the East” or “Asia” occupies too large a portion of his message to China, thus eclipsing other aspects of his thought worthy of attention. It is almost natural that the Chinese people bear a long-term misunderstanding toward Tagore, and the frame of research derived thereof suffers from rigidity to a certain degree.

As previously described, studies on Tagore in contemporary Chinese academia have two principal foci, “Tagore and China” and “cultural interaction between China and India,” which crystallize into two interrelated research paradigms.<sup>5</sup> Concerning the former, as early as 1961, Ji Xianlin 季羨林 wrote a long essay entitled “Tagore and China: In Memory of the Centenary of Tagore,”

---

<sup>2</sup> A critical issue here is how those Chinese intellectuals who were most welcoming of Tagore created a public image of the latter to meet their own needs. There are many observations. For example, the great leftist writer Lu Xun commented in 1934 that “had our poets not made him [i.e. Tagore] a living god, our youth should not have been so distant from him...” See his “Masha yu pengsha,” in *Lu Xun quanji*, Vol.5, pp.615-617.

<sup>3</sup> Krishna Dutta and Andrew Robinson, *Rabindranath Tagore: The Myriad-Minded Man*.

<sup>4</sup> For instance, Tagore enjoyed tremendous popularity in Europe, which was the result of his proposition of spiritual civilization of the East satisfying the psychological need of his audiences. Consequently, he made the same appeal in China. Furthermore, the devastation caused by WWI also convinced Tagore that it was best for the Chinese people to return to their humanistic tradition. Therefore, Tagore’s praise of science was not fully echoed in his speeches made in China. There are many discussions on this point; a recent, brief analysis can be found in: Amartya Sen, “Tagore and China,” in Tan Chung and Amiya Dev eds., *Tagore and China*, pp.3-10.

<sup>5</sup> It is noteworthy that Tagore’s initial influence on China was felt in the New Literature Movement in the 1910s and 1920s. Indeed, literature was the most palpable connection between the Indian poet and his Chinese admirers, a fact that has never failed to draw critical attention. However, given the intellectual milieu of late twentieth-century China described above, literature is not a main contributor to the resurging interest in Tagore and thus hardly forms a research paradigm. For a general discussion of this literary connection, see Zhang Yu 張羽, *Taigeer yu Zhongguo xiandaiwenxue* 泰戈爾與中國現代文學 (Tagore and Modern Chinese Literature) (Kunming: Yunnan People’s Publishing House, 2005). A miscellany of analyses of Tagore’s literature, thought, cultural inheritance and influence is Wei Liming’s 魏麗明 “Wanshi de luren” *Taigeer: cong Shipo, Yiesu, Shashibiya dao Zhongguo* 「萬世的旅人」泰戈爾—從濕婆、耶穌、莎士比亞到中國 (Tagore the “Traveler of Ten Thousand Generations”: from Shiva, Jesus, Shakespeare to China) (Beijing: Chinese Compilation & Translation Press, 2011). Interestingly, neither author ignores the ideological disputations that Tagore aroused in China in 1924.

which is one of the earliest articles reflecting upon Tagore's visit to China and its concomitant lessons.<sup>6</sup> As yet the most exhaustive study on Tagore's lectures made in Asian countries (including China, Japan, and India) and their respective responses to his message is Stephen Hay's *Asian Ideas of East and West: Tagore and His Critics in Japan, China, and India* published in 1970.<sup>7</sup> Drawing on a profusion of primary sources, Hay's perspective has been largely adopted by later Chinese scholars; that is, their focus remains on Tagore's 1924 trip to China and the disputations he aroused there, with varying degrees of precision of detail. Ai Dan's *Debating and Discussing: Tagore in China* (sic.) is a recent example. The author traces the history of Tagore studies in China, expanding on the itinerary of Tagore's 1924 visit and on his interaction with several leading intellectuals in early twentieth-century China. While this book is worth referencing, it overlaps many previous studies; the sections on intellectual background and future prospects would benefit from more insight. The author states that "for over half a century, studies on 'Tagore and China' have produced significant results;" she also points out some limitations inherent in existing research. However, in repeating chronological details and superficial differences between Tagore's thought and that of contemporary Chinese intellectuals, this work is not immune from those very drawbacks.<sup>8</sup>

On the other hand, studies on "cultural interaction between China and India" must be placed within the context of the rise of Asia, with Tagore considered a pioneer in reconnecting the two countries in the modern era. There are some representative works in this field, such as *Across the Himalayan Gap: An Indian Quest for Understanding China* published in 1998,<sup>9</sup> and *CHINIDA: Idealism and Realization*, published in 2007.<sup>10</sup> In August, 2010, a conference entitled "Understanding Tagore: New Perspectives and New Research" was convened at Peking University, and the collection of papers that resulted were

---

<sup>6</sup> Ji Xianlin, "Taigeer yu Zhongguo: jinian Taigeer dansheng yibai zhounian," in *Ji Xianlin wenji*, Vol.5, pp.180-213.

<sup>7</sup> Stephen Hay, *Asian Ideas of East and West: Tagore and His Critics in Japan, China, and India*.

<sup>8</sup> Ai Dan, *Taigeer yu wusishiqi de shixiangwenhua lunzheng*, pp.15-17. Those limitations include: 1. duplication of research; 2. narrowness of research perspectives; 3. unvarying research methods.

<sup>9</sup> Tan Chung ed., *Across the Himalayan Gap: An Indian Quest for Understanding China*. This book has a later, parallel Chinese volume, that is, Zhang Minqiu 張敏秋 ed., *Kuayue Ximalaya zhangai: Zhongguo xunqiu liaojie Indu* 跨越喜馬拉雅障礙—中國尋求了解印度 (Across the Himalayan Gap: A Chinese Quest for Understanding India) (Chongqing: Chongqing Publishing House, 2006).

<sup>10</sup> Tang Chung ed., *Zhong-In datong: lixiang yu shixian*.

published in 2011 under the title of *Tagore and China*.<sup>11</sup> The contributors to this volume are the current leading scholars on Tagore studies. Besides continuing to explore the relationship between Tagore and China, some authors even attempt to establish a new paradigm of civilizational discourse based on the long cultural interaction between China and India. In addition, in Taiwan, a research group headed by Shih Chih-Yu 石之瑜, professor of the Department and Institute of Political Science, National Taiwan University, has published many studies on Tagore's ideal of Asia and the prospects it provides for the Sino-Indian relationship in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.<sup>12</sup>

All the research mentioned above is conducive to a better understanding of Tagore, and is evidence that the single topic of "Tagore and China," if thoroughly probed and connected with relevant issues, showcases the complexity of Tagore's intellectual activities.<sup>13</sup> Complementing previous research, this chapter shifts the focus to the intellectual world of early twentieth-century China through a refraction of Tagore. To achieve this goal, I dispose of the conventional frame of argument and construct a space of civilizational discourse that differs from the ideological debate that occurred when Tagore visited China. By referring to a different set of texts, it is hoped that some hitherto hidden dimensions of this significant cultural event can be revealed.

## 6.2 The Conversation between Tagore and Feng Youlan

At the end of 1920, Tagore went to America for several months to raise funds for Visva-Bharati, the university he was to establish to further cultural interaction between the East and the West. During Tagore's stay in New York, Feng Youlan, who was studying for a PhD degree at Columbia University and was to become one of the leading philosophers of modern China, went to visit

---

<sup>11</sup> Tan Chung and Amiya Dev eds., *Tagore and China*. This book was published in an English-Chinese bilingual version in China in 2011.

<sup>12</sup> Huang Wei-Lin's master thesis, *Wenmingchayi yu xiandaixing: Taigee de zhengzhilixiang jiqi dui Zhongguowenming de qipan*, is one of the examples. A brief discussion of this book can be found in Chapter 1.

<sup>13</sup> Besides the two main problematics specified above, that is, historical reconstruction of the 1924 disputations and great expectations of a closer relationship between China and India, Tagore's criticism of West-centric modernity and materialistic culture also proves a thought-provoking issue for rapidly developing China in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. An example of such reflection is Zhang Rulun's 張汝倫 "Ruguo Taigeeer jintian laihua" 如果泰戈爾今天來華 (If Tagore Visited China Today), in *Dushu* 讀書 (Reading), No.384 (March, 2011), pp. 28-36.



Tagore and ask his opinion about the differences between Eastern and Western civilizations. They conversed in English, but Feng recorded the content in Chinese and published the dialogue in a journal in China in 1921 (referred to as “Conversation” hereafter). The account is not long but many philosophical issues are touched upon therein. Here I will summarize “Conversation” and leave my analyses to the next section.

To begin with, Feng Youlan explained the motivation for his visit:

Since I came to America, I have been interested in comparing everything foreign with that of China. At first I compared only concrete, individual things, which I then extended to abstract, general things. Finally those comparisons crystallized into an overarching one, that is, a comparison between Eastern and Western civilizations...In the *Peking University Daily* I received days ago there was a lecture given by Liang Shuming on *East-West Civilizations and Their Philosophies*. Unfortunately only the introduction was given. To my pleasant surprise, Tagore, who is from India, is now in New York. As he is currently a leading figure in the East, what he has to say about this question can represent what a majority of Easterners think...<sup>14</sup>

The record of their conversation follows, starting with Tagore’s expression of his long-standing wish to visit China, and his heartfelt welcome of the young Chinese. After exchanging greetings, Feng Youlan opened their philosophical dialogue with the statement:

Although the civilization of ancient China was brilliant, it is outmoded now. In recent years, we have a new movement to reform everything old in China—philosophy, literature, art, and all social institutions—to adapt the country to the modern world...<sup>15</sup>

To this Tagore replied:

---

<sup>14</sup> Feng Youlan, “Yu Indu Taiguer tanhua: dongxiwenming zhi bijiaoguan,” in *Sansongtang quanji*, Vol.11, p.3.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p.4.

Adaptation is urgent indeed...Western civilization prospers because its force is concentrated...On the other hand, our Eastern countries are scattered, do not study each other, and do not seek cooperation; therefore, Eastern civilization declines day by day. I am in America this time in order to raise funds for a university that will conduct focused studies on Eastern civilization. What to preserve and what to abolish must be decided by our own judgment and through our own research. We cannot be blindly influenced by Westerners...<sup>16</sup>

Afterwards, Feng delved into a deeper philosophical inquiry stemming from the general discussion on civilization:

Recently a question has been lingering in my mind, that is, whether the difference between Eastern and Western civilizations is a *difference of degree*, or a *difference of kind*?<sup>17</sup> (Feng's own English expressions are in italics; the same afterwards)

Tagore's response is as follows:

I can answer this question. It is a difference of kind. The purpose of life in the West is "*activity*," whereas in the East it is "*realization*." Westerners look to activity and progress without a definite aim ahead, so their activities gradually come to be unbalanced...According to Eastern philosophy, truth is intrinsic to human beings but is temporarily covered over. Once we remove the cover, truth will come to light.<sup>18</sup>

"The way of learning requires daily accruelement; the way of the *Dao* requires daily reduction." Feng immediately cited two lines from *Laozi* 老子 to interpret Tagore's views and then confirmed: "Western civilization is 'daily accruelement,' while Eastern civilization is 'daily reduction.'" Is that correct?"<sup>19</sup>

---

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

Tagore agreed with the analogy and elaborated further:

The drawback of Eastern life is that it is too *passive*. Isn't it a disadvantage that comes with "daily reduction"? Being too *passive* is undeniable, but it is also part of *truth*. Truth consists of both *active* and *passive* sides. For instance, voice is passive and singing is active...The active changes ceaselessly but the passive remains constant...Eastern civilization is like voice and Western civilization is like singing, both of which are indispensable...Now what the East can contribute to the West is "*wisdom*," while the West can contribute "*activity*" to the East.<sup>20</sup>

Then Feng applied conventional Chinese terms to Tagore's remarks: "So we can call the passive '*capacity*' and the active '*action*'." Tagore approved of this analogy again.<sup>21</sup> When evaluating the pros and cons of the real world, Tagore said that if reality is instrumental to mental creativity, then it is good; it is bad if obstructive to such creativity. But what really matters is how the human mind treats material things, which led to Tagore's conclusion that "creation is not possible without the help of either mind or matter."<sup>22</sup> When Feng asked for advice for the Chinese people, Tagore replied:

...I have only one piece of advice for China: "Learn science quickly." What the East lacks and badly needs is science...China has had many inventors in its civilization; I firmly believe that such a great country can learn science and make contributions to it...<sup>23</sup>

Finally, Feng politely inquired about how to help the establishment of the university, and Tagore made a simple reply; thus ended the conversation. However, Feng Youlan added two more paragraphs to the record as his own conclusion and self-reflection.

---

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p.5. There are at least three different ways of dividing this paragraph and attributing the words to Tagore or Feng, or both. This chapter follows the version included in the complete works of Feng Youlan, which is presumably more reliable.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p.6.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.6-7.

...What Tagore says seems, at first glance, similar to the old Chinese slogan, “Chinese learning as capacity; Western learning for action.” But actually they are different...Tagore’s proposition is that there is only one truth that contains two sides, with the East inclined to the passive side and the West inclined to the active side. In other words, Tagore’s philosophy is monism, while the old view of China was dualism...

I think that whatever Eastern civilization may come to be, it is worth studying. Why? Because its existence is a fact...After studying facts, we try to describe them in systematic ways to devise theories to interpret them. Such descriptions and interpretations constitute science. The East tends to ignore facts and talk vainly about theories, which is incompatible with the spirit of science. Now China is propagandizing those Western principles of democracy and Bolshevism, but very few people are addressing the problem of how to adapt China to them. Is this any different from our dull imperial examinations? We must study facts and devise theories to regulate them, which embodies exactly the spirit of the modern West!<sup>24</sup>

There are two reasons for a faithful presentation of the 1920 conversation between the Indian and Chinese thinkers. Firstly, the content is full of philosophical depth. Secondly, references to this “Conversation” are surprisingly scarce. Even when mentioned occasionally in some articles, it serves as background for other arguments rather than constituting the issue in question.<sup>25</sup> For example, Stephen Hay in his monograph has a brief analysis of the conversation, but his conclusion is misleading. He says that Feng “left the interview unmoved by Tagore’s appeal,”<sup>26</sup> and then merges in Feng’s criticism of the Eastern inclination towards empty words, thereby proving his general observation that “those [students] specializing in academic philosophy proved as

---

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.7-8.

<sup>25</sup> There is an article entitled “Taigeer de Zhongguo qingjie: cong Feng Youlan yu Taigeer de tanhua shuoqi” 泰戈爾的中國情結——從馮友蘭與泰戈爾的談話說起 (Tagore’s “China Affection”: A Conversation between Tagore and Feng Youlan) by Qian Gengsen 錢耕森, in *Study of Sino-Western Culture*, No.5 (June, 2004), pp.112-119. The title of the article is similar to the current chapter, but it does not deal with the issues of intellectual history.

<sup>26</sup> Stephen Hay, *Asian Ideas of East and West: Tagore and His Critics in Japan, China, and India*, p.236.

skeptical of his ideas as were their elders in this field.”<sup>27</sup> Stephen Hay denied any depth to this conversation. Nonetheless, the citations above indicate that Feng Youlan showed no rejection of or contempt for Tagore. On the contrary, as he stated: “The right or wrong of Mr. Tagore’s opinion is another matter. What we should know is that such is the view of Eastern and Western civilizations held by the leading figure of the East.”<sup>28</sup> It can be confirmed that Tagore’s notion of civilization, his approval of the analogy between *Laozi* and his own thought, and his monist philosophy had at least stimulated the formulation of Feng’s idea.

Stephen Hay’s treatment is typical of scholarly conventions on “Tagore and China”: the issue is often approached from the perspective of disputations around Tagore in China with little attention paid to discursive complexity and intellectual context.<sup>29</sup> As Tagore and Feng’s conversation was conducted at an earlier date, it bore no direct relation to the 1924 event. Furthermore, the philosophy-oriented content was also far from the ideological rivalries characterizing contemporary China. Therefore, “Conversation” failed to appeal to the Chinese public or to enhance their understanding of Tagore, whose complexity was seriously underestimated.

As mentioned in the introduction, Tagore was responsible for the biased image of himself in China as an “ultra-conservative,” which here is understood as someone who adheres to tradition. Nevertheless, while it is true that Tagore’s speeches were narrowly focused on so-called Eastern civilization, his Chinese critics also filtered his message and found fault with the traditionalist-sounding parts. In any event, Chinese debates became ideology-ridden, against which this chapter proposes a new perspective to explore Tagore’s interaction with Chinese intellectuals, starting from his conversation with Feng Youlan. The choice of this starting point is justifiable. The fact that Feng was not an active polemicist in the several rounds of cultural debate in China from the 1910s to the 1930s, and that he is not a usual focus of studies on “Tagore and China” lend this study a somewhat objective position vis-à-vis the cultural ambience around the time of Tagore’s visit to China, and from the mainstream research paradigm developed

---

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p.234.

<sup>28</sup> Feng Youlan, “Yu Indu Taiguer tanhua: dongxiwenming zhi bijiaoguan,” in *Sansongtang quanji*, Vol.11, p.7.

<sup>29</sup> In “Tagore and China,” Amartya Sen criticizes this conventional approach and expects discussions of more sophistication; see note 4. Concerning the process of formulation of Tagore’s civilizational discourse, see Chapter 2.

thereafter. The space of discourse thus created will be different from the current framework of research in terms of both historical complexity and intellectual depth.

### 6.3 Network of Thought Derived from the Conversation

There is one point worth mentioning before delving into analysis of the conversation between Tagore and Feng Youlan. The only way for later generations to learn of this intellectual intercourse is through Feng's own record in Chinese. Therefore, it is difficult to determine to what degree the content is shaped by Feng's subjective thinking. Structurally speaking, Feng started the account with his own motives and ended it with his philosophical reflections; throughout the conversation he also tended to interpret Tagore's remarks in traditional Chinese terms. It is precisely because of Feng's involvement of Tagore in the formulation of his philosophical system that "Conversation" brilliantly sketches an episode in modern Chinese intellectual history, with Tagore's interaction with contemporary Chinese and foreign thinkers serving to contextualize that episode within a broader current of thought.

Remotely echoing the beginning of "Conversation," in his late years Feng recalled in *Autobiography of the Sansong Chamber* (referred to as *Autobiography* hereafter) that the three years spent at Peking University brought him into the real world of knowledge, which was far beyond the realm of learning required by the imperial examination system:

There is a contradiction between these two worlds, which derives from the contradiction between two cultures. This contradiction is visible throughout the early modern and modern history of China. Some people at that time did not recognize this contradiction to be between ancient and modern, old and new; instead, they considered it to be a contradiction between East and West, China and foreign countries. Eastern and Western cultures are different because their underlying philosophies are different.<sup>30</sup>

Feng stated that in 1919 he received an official scholarship to study abroad

---

<sup>30</sup> Feng Youlan, *Sansongtang zixu*, in *Sansongtang quanji*, Vol.1, p.171.

and was planning to enter Columbia University in New York: “I brought with me this problem—namely the reality of China—to America.”<sup>31</sup> This autobiographical account is very important. Although Feng was neither directly involved in the “debate on East-West cultures” around the time of the May Fourth Movement in 1919, nor did he participate in the “debate on science *versus* philosophy of life” in 1923, the contemporary cultural atmosphere of China had not only stimulated his own thinking but also shaped his later intellectual activities. This is why Feng went to visit Tagore when the latter visited the U.S. in 1920. Furthermore, the distinctions between “ancient and modern, old and new” and between “East and West, China and foreign countries” mentioned in *Autobiography* should correspond to the differences of “degree” and of “kind” respectively that appear in Feng’s conversation with Tagore. As for the comment that “Eastern and Western cultures are different because their underlying philosophies are different,” he points out in *Autobiography* that one of the representatives of such a view was Liang Shuming, the scholar whose lecture captivated Feng Youlan so much that he regretted that the whole text was not available, as described at the beginning of “Conversation.”

In brief, Liang Shuming, in his *East-West Cultures and Their Philosophies*, specifies three different ways of life. “Firstly, going forward to fulfill one’s needs; secondly, changing, harmonizing, or tempering one’s needs; and thirdly, turning back to restrain one’s needs.”<sup>32</sup> In his own view, the civilizations of the West, China, and India embodied the three ways of life, which differ from each other not in terms of quality, but in priorities given to each phase of cultural development. If a people are seeking to feed, shelter themselves, and overcome nature, they follow the Western way of life. As such pursuit of satisfaction of personal needs inevitably leads to desire, which makes life painful and overly calculating, then the Confucian—hence Chinese—attitude of adapting to even adverse circumstances becomes necessary to foster a well-balanced life temperament. Finally, after both material and emotional needs are met, there is the ultimate problem of death and continuity of life. Here, the Buddhist—hence Indian—way leads to the realization of the final truth.<sup>33</sup>

---

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p.172.

<sup>32</sup> Liang Shuming, *Dongxi wenhua jiqi zhexue*, p.68.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.249-252.

Feng Youlan's interest in Liang Shuming was purely philosophical. As he states in *Autobiography*, "most of the many comments made at that time were mere demonstrations of the contradiction [between the two civilizations]; there were few extensive interpretations of the contradiction itself."<sup>34</sup> Liang elucidated the spiritual and philosophical foundations of Eastern and Western civilizations, which certainly satisfied Feng Youlan intellectually. Feng paid lifelong homage to Liang. The latter's *East-West Cultures and Their Philosophies* was published in 1921, and Feng wrote to him the next year to discuss it. They did not agree upon every point, but Feng's praise of Liang remained extraordinary: "Whatever the disagreements between us, there are very few people except Sir [i.e. Liang Shuming] in today's China who have real questions in mind and dare to answer them themselves. The publication of your book has added luster to Chinese academia."<sup>35</sup> That same year, Feng wrote an English review of Liang's book, which ends with the following commendation: "Whether Buddhist or Confucian thought are exactly as he interprets, I think there is no one who will not feel moved by his creativity and rigorous argumentation. Mr. Liang has real insight, which justifies the existence of such a philosophical work."<sup>36</sup> Even if Feng's philosophical and political stances underwent a sea change after 1949, in his later work, *A New History of Chinese Philosophy*, he still evaluated Liang's ideas in highly positive terms.<sup>37</sup>

Apparently, for Liang, the difference between Eastern and Western civilizations was one of "kind" rather than of "degree." He regarded the three ways that he had specified as representing fundamentally different views of life. Feng was also inclined to such interpretation in the 1920s, which is evidenced by his own accounts in "To Liang Shuming" and *Autobiography*. However, the most vivid substantiation of this view can be discerned in his conversation with Tagore. In the beginning, Feng said that traditional Chinese civilization failed to meet modern needs, and that in recent years Chinese intellectuals had been trying to totally reform tradition "to adapt the country to the modern world."

---

<sup>34</sup> Feng Youlan, *Sansongtang zixu*, in *Sansongtang quanji*, Vol.1, p.172.

<sup>35</sup> Feng Youlan, "Zhi Liang Shuming" 致梁漱溟 (To Liang Shuming), in *Sansongtang quanji*, Vol.14, p.591.

<sup>36</sup> Feng Youlan, "Ping Liang Shuming zhu Dongxi wenhua jiqi zhexue" 評梁漱溟著《東西文化及其哲學》 (Comment on Liang Shuming's *East-West Cultures and Their Philosophies*) in *Sansongtang quanji*, Vol.11, p.57.

<sup>37</sup> Feng Youlan, *Zhongguo zhexueshi xinbian* 中國哲學史新編 (A New History of Chinese Philosophy), VII, in *Sansongtang quanji*, Vol.10, pp.543-552.



Tagore agreed that “adaptation” was urgently needed, but his proviso was that, concerning Eastern civilization, “what to preserve and what to abolish must be decided by our own judgment and through our own research.” This verbal exchange constitutes a momentous event in modern intellectual history: Feng’s focus was on tradition *versus* modernity, which was shifted to the East *versus* the West by Tagore, who went on to emphasize that “perhaps there is something wrong with our civilization, but how can we know that without serious study?”<sup>38</sup> Feng’s reference to *Laozi* also prompted Tagore’s comment that truth consists of active and passive sides, “both of which are indispensable.” This analysis makes it clear that both paragraphs of Feng’s self-reflection at the end of “Conversation” bear direct relation to Tagore’s remarks: Feng recognized the difference between the monism believed by Tagore and the old Chinese slogan, “Chinese learning as capacity; Western learning for action.” Besides, Feng’s conclusion that Eastern civilization should be studied echoed Tagore’s proposition. In any case, Tagore inspired or at least confirmed Feng’s own ideas: between the two men there was a resonance that Stephen Hay failed to perceive. As time progressed, Feng came to adopt a more abstract view to encompass the antitheses between tradition and modernity, the East and the West:

In the late 1930s I also discussed similar questions [about Eastern and Western civilizations]...such discussion concerns a philosophical issue, that is, the relationship between the general and particular. A certain social type is general, but a country or nation is particular...It is possible as well as necessary to learn the general. In contrast, to learn the particular is impossible and unnecessary.<sup>39</sup>

Nonetheless, around the time Tagore visited China in 1924, Feng Youlan was still obsessed with the question of whether Eastern and Western civilizations differ in “degree” or in “kind.” There is one point worth particular attention. What Feng compared with Tagore’s monism was the old theory of late nineteenth-century China (“Chinese learning as capacity; Western learning for action”) rather than the new theories that were formulated around the May

---

<sup>38</sup> Feng Youlan, “Yu Indu Taiguer tanhua: dongxiwenming zhi bijiaoguan,” in *Complete Works of the Sansong Chambe*, Vol.11, p.4.

<sup>39</sup> Feng Youlan, *Zhongguo zhhexueshi xinbian*, VII, in *Sansongtang quanji*, Vol.10, p.582.

Fourth Movement. In the 1910s and 1920s China experienced a fierce, large-scale debate on Eastern *versus* Western civilizations. The two main groups—the pro-Western side led by Chen Duxiu and the traditionalist or harmonizer side led by Du Yaquan 杜亞泉 (1873-1933)—criticized and even slandered each other in their respective magazines. However, Feng Youlan completely ignored these disputes in “Conversation.” One probable explanation is that he believed they were lacking in philosophical depth, just as he stresses in *Autobiography* that “most of the many comments made at that time were mere demonstrations of the contradiction.” This accounts for Feng’s high regard for Liang Shuming’s work, although he also indicated that Liang was often too subjective in drawing conclusions. Unfortunately, Tagore’s visit to China as a cultural event was part of that “contradiction,” which resulted in relevant studies on “Tagore and China” being restricted to the dispute that arose in 1924. A serious consequence was that not much historical complexity or intellectual insight has been attempted in research in this area ever since.

Tagore’s advocacy of Eastern spiritual civilization in China contains the following statement:

This age to which we belong, does it not still represent night in the human world, a world asleep, whilst individual races are shut up within their own limits, calling themselves nations[?]...This age, that still persists, must be described as the darkest age in human civilization. But I do not despair...Science also is truth. It has its own place, in the healing of the sick, and in the giving of more food, more leisure for life. But when it helps the strong to crush the weaker...their own weapons will be turned against them...Let the morning of this new age dawn in the East, from which the great streams of idealism have sprung in the past, making the fields of life fertile with their influence...<sup>40</sup>

This statement encapsulates many critical points of Tagore’s civilizational discourse, including the dichotomies between nationalism and universalism, scientism and idealism, and so forth. Nevertheless, the most thought-provoking

---

<sup>40</sup> Rabindranath Tagore, “Talks in China,” in Mohit K. Ray, ed., *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore, Volume IV: Essays*, pp.748-750.

aspect of his statement is that it upsets the conventional cognition of tradition and modernity. While Tagore firmly believed in the spiritual glory of the traditional East, he regarded the materialistic achievement of the West as less modern than brutal and dark; he predicted that true modernity would only come with revival of the ideals of the East.<sup>41</sup> On this point, a similarity between Tagore's and Liang Shuming's philosophies is discernible, although their conclusions were quite different. From the previous discussion we know that Liang was by no means a simplistic cultural harmonizer. On the contrary, his theory is closer to cultural evolutionism, with the so-called "evolution" here a counterargument to the Western paradigm. By regarding the material achievements of the modern West as the first step to satisfying the needs of human life, Liang credited spiritual superiority to Eastern civilization. To him the problem of China and India was not stagnancy but precociousness; they prioritized spiritual pursuit over material desire, thus failing to improve their cultures in terms of technological progress.<sup>42</sup> Moreover, Liang in his book mentions Tagore several times. In his view, Tagore's philosophy was different from the other-worldly and often passive thought that characterized Indian tradition, so it was inappropriate to consider him as representative of Indian culture.<sup>43</sup> As Tagore preached the philosophy of love, which encouraged people to take part in human affairs without selfish calculation, Liang states that "although there is no seeming relationship between Tagore and Chinese philosophy, I would like to argue that he belongs to China, to the Confucian way of life."<sup>44</sup> While we do not have to agree with Liang's argument, his observation is provocative.

Judging from the analyses above, when we shift the focus of studies away from Tagore's 1924 visit, a stimulating intellectual world behind the barrage of disputes can be unveiled. In the next section this network of thought will be expanded to encompass sources not exclusively Chinese to explore Tagore's relevance to the intellectual history of the modern world.

---

<sup>41</sup> Tagore made the same points in his speeches in Japan in 1916. See Chapter 3 for a detailed analysis.

<sup>42</sup> Liang Shuming, *Dongxi wenhua jiqi zhexue*, pp.287-288.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p.84.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p.234.

## 6.4 A Comparison of Tagore with Chinese and Western Thinkers

Naturally, Liang Shuming's daring classification of world civilization drew many criticisms. As shown in the previous section, although an admirer of Liang, Feng Youlan did not completely agree with his view. Zhang Dongsun also pointed out that "the so-called *East-West Cultures and Their Philosophies* is merely a 'discourse of Eastern and Western cultures from a philosophical viewpoint,' which is different from the discourse of ethnical psychology."<sup>45</sup> Zhang differentiated between culture and philosophy. While culture contains everything about the attitudes and modes of living of a people or nation, philosophy is the brainchild of a few thinkers; the two should not be mixed.

Of all critical responses to Liang's book, Hu Shi's "Reading *East-West Cultures and Their Philosophies* by Mr. Liang Shuming" is the most influential. Hu's comment is satirical, and rebuts Liang's overarching philosophical induction with historical observations.<sup>46</sup> There is another well-known essay by Hu Shi comparing Eastern and Western civilizations that starts with the following statement:

The most groundless and vicious fallacy in vogue nowadays is the one that dismisses Western civilization as materialistic, and venerates Eastern civilization as spiritual...In recent years, the great war that ravaged Europe arouses a sense of disgust at the scientific culture of the modern world; that is why we hear oftentimes the eulogy of Eastern spiritual civilization from Western scholars.<sup>47</sup>

This article was written in 1926, after the publication of Liang's book and Tagore's visit to China. Arguably, those who upheld the superiority of Eastern spirituality were targets of Hu's criticism, including Liang and Tagore. After

---

<sup>45</sup> Zhang Dongsun, "Du *Dongxi wenhua jiqi zhexue*" 讀《東西文化及其哲學》(Reading *East-West Cultures and Their Philosophies*), in Chen Song 陳崧, ed., *Wusi qianhou dongxi wenhuawenti lunzhanwenxuan* 五四前後東西文化問題論戰文選 (Selected Articles on the Debate of East-West Cultures during the May Fourth Era) (Beijing: China Social Sciences Press, 1989), p.503.

<sup>46</sup> Hu Shi, "Du Liang Shuming xiansheng de *Dongxi wenhua jiqi zhexue*" 讀梁漱溟先生的《東西文化及其哲學》(Reading *East-West Cultures and Their Philosophies* by Mr. Liang Shuming), in Ouyang Zhesheng ed., *Hu Shi wenji*, Vol.3, pp.182-197.

<sup>47</sup> Hu Shi, "Women duiyu jindai xiyangwenming de taidu" 我們對於近代西洋文明的態度 (Our Attitude toward Modern Western Civilization), in *ibid.*, Vol.4, p.3.

contrasting Eastern and Western civilizations point by point, Hu concluded that “here we find an essential difference between Eastern and Western cultures: the former abandons itself by not thinking; the latter seeks truth persistently.”<sup>48</sup> Hu reached his conclusion of an East characterized by inertia *versus* a West characterized by progress by paralleling historical examples that are deliberately culled. Hu’s tone was also critical when he claimed that “such a civilization [i.e. Eastern civilization] that is dominated by material environment and that does not seek to break this environmental bondage is a civilization of indolent people, a civilization that is materialistic in the real sense.”<sup>49</sup> Of course, Hu aimed his poignant remarks at the problems that were plaguing modern Chinese society and culture. However, his criticism of Liang’s cultural philosophy as “general and imprecise” was also based on subjective observations.

During Tagore’s visit to China in 1924, as a committed liberal, Hu Shi defended Tagore from blasphemies that were deemed unsuitable toward a foreign guest. But when it came to philosophy, Hu showed no sympathy at all with Tagore’s thought.

When I listen to Tagore’s praise of Eastern spiritual civilization, I always feel ashamed...What American audiences expect from a lecturer from the East is the kind of information given by Tagore; that is, criticism of the materialistic West and eulogy of the spiritual East...Indeed, Eastern civilization receives much harsher censure from me than from any Western critics, and my appreciation of modern Western civilization is higher than the self-evaluation of Westerners.<sup>50</sup>

Hu Shi sided with “total Westernization” out of practical considerations:

Those propositions of cultural eclecticism and Sino-centrism are nothing but vain talk. For the moment, we have no alternative but to try hard to totally accept the new civilization of this new world. Once

---

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p.7.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.12-13.

<sup>50</sup> Cited from Zhou Zhiping 周質平, *Hu Shi yu Weiliansi* 胡適與韋蓮司 (Hu Shi and Edith Clifford Williams) (Beijing: Peking UP, 1998), p.57. Translated back to English by myself.

it is totally accepted, the inertia of old culture will naturally make it an eclectic, harmonized new Sino-centric culture.<sup>51</sup>

To this claim Feng Youlan retorted:

It is not amazing that Hu Shi proposed “total Westernization.” But according to his words quoted here, the reason for his proposition of “total Westernization” is kind of special. It seems to me that he considered such a proposition to be a little extreme, too, but he also thought that only an extreme proposition can bring “Westernization” into balance. What the balance looks like he didn’t explain.<sup>52</sup>

It is this lacuna—“he didn’t explain”—that confines Hu Shi’s comparison of Eastern and Western civilizations to historical critique or ideological debate, without raising itself to the level of a philosophical system.

It might be safe to conclude that cultural debates in China in the 1920s consisted of at least two spaces of discourse. Some probed the “backwardness” of the East from a historical perspective, like Hu Shi, while others attempted to compare the essence of Eastern and Western civilizations, like Liang Shuming. Li Zehou describes the two major trends ushered in by the May Fourth Movement as the “duet of enlightening and saving the country,” and regards Hu Shi as the head of those who sought to enlighten China through educational, cultural, and scientific works.<sup>53</sup> From the analysis above, it is clear that as opposition to those who followed the principles of class struggle and the proletarian revolution of Marx-Leninism to save China from ruin, there was more than one proposition for enlightening the country via intellectual endeavors.

Another group that expressed opinions on these issues during the debate was the revivalists of Eastern culture headed by Liang Qichao. Witnessing the catastrophe brought by WWI and echoing the view held by some Westerners, they believed Chinese civilization could serve to remedy a Western civilization

---

<sup>51</sup> Cited from Feng Youlan, *Zhongguo zhhexueshi xinbian*, VII, in *Sansongtang quanji*, Vol.10, p.581.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.581-582.

<sup>53</sup> Li Zehou, “Qimeng yu jiuwang de shuangchong bianzou,” in *Xiandai Zhongguo sixiang shilun*, pp.37-38.

that had become bankrupt. Such an idea was dismissed not only by Hu Shi,<sup>54</sup> however, but also criticized by Liang Shuming.<sup>55</sup> Nonetheless, in Liang Qichao's *Record of Reflections during the European Trip* (published in 1920), there are some keen observations, such as the following:

During the past century both the material and spiritual changes of Europe derived from the principle of the "development of the individual," which is still being followed on a daily basis. A fundamental difference between such a [modern] civilization and the civilizations of ancient times, of the Middle Ages, and even of the eighteenth century is that the latter were aristocratic and passive, while the former is mass-oriented and self-propelled...Modern civilization is created by each average person in society through their own will. Therefore, although its "quality" may not equal past achievements at times, its "quantity" is much greater and the "force" much more continuous than before. In a word, everything in modern Europe is mass-oriented.<sup>56</sup>

The reason for singling out this comment is that a critical historical juncture is touched upon, that is, the change from the "development of the individual" to the "mass-orientation" of European civilization. This observation contradicts that of Chen Duxiu. In an article published in 1915, Chen points out the differences between Eastern and Western civilizations, stating: "Western races are individual-based; Eastern races are family-based." According to Chen, it is such an emphasis on individuals that propelled development in many fields: "ethics, morals, politics, laws—all that is desired by a society and pursued by a country is to protect and support the freedom, rights, and happiness of its individuals."<sup>57</sup> Here Chen Duxiu does not address the way Western societies concentrated and reinforced their power. On the other hand, although Liang

---

<sup>54</sup> Hu Shi once commented that "such a theory derived from a pathetic mentality, but caters to the megalomania of Eastern nations and fuels the fire of the conservative force of the East." See Hu Shi, "Women duiyu jindai xiyangwenming de taidu," in Ouyang Zhesheng ed., *Hu Shi wenji*, Vol.4, p.3.

<sup>55</sup> Liang Shuming, *Dongxi wenhua jiqi zhexue*, p.16.

<sup>56</sup> Liang Qichao, *Ouyou xinyinglu*, in *Yinbingshi heji*, *Wenji*, No.23, p.16.

<sup>57</sup> Chen Duxiu, "Dongxi minzu genben sixiang zhi chayi" 東西民族根本思想之差異 (Fundamental Differences of Thought between Eastern and Western Races), in Ren Jianshu et al. eds., *Chen Duxiu zhuzuoxuan*, Vol.1, p.166.

Qichao was sensitive enough to grasp the trend, he gave no clear explanations for the phenomenon in the citation above. This mechanism of concentration, that is the West-originated system of the nation-state, is what Tagore criticized throughout his life. Tagore once said:

Western civilization came into being because the power to rule was distributed among a whole people. There was an individual dignity, an individual consciousness of importance. Dictatorships put an end to such individuality.<sup>58</sup>

Here Tagore was targeting the fascist government of Benito Mussolini (1883-1945). Although the comment is directed at a somewhat extreme form of government, criticism of West-originated nationalism represents a recurrent theme of Tagore's lectures and writings. In Tagore's view, the mechanism of the nation-state entails nothing but its own function and development, paying no regard to humanity and its ideals.<sup>59</sup> It is nationalism that linked the egoism of individuals and the collective violence of nations (imperialism is the highest form of its development), characterizing what Tagore termed as materialist Western civilization. In a conversation with the British writer Herbert G. Wells (1866-1946), Tagore expressed concern that individual cultures would be effaced or made uniform, while Wells seemed optimistic that world cultures would inevitably converge, implying that heterogeneity is something that obstructs the convergence.<sup>60</sup> Although the conversation is too short to contain Wells' perspective on world history and civilization, it can be said that what worried Tagore was always the egoism and nationalism—standing at the two ends of the same spectrum—of modern Western civilization, both of which Tagore perceived as lacking in love of and empathy with others.<sup>61</sup>

A few examples have been drawn to show that Tagore was not a blind

---

<sup>58</sup> Rabindranath Tagore, "Interview with F. L. Minigerode," in Mohit K. Ray, ed., *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore, Volume VIII: Miscellaneous Writing*, p.1234.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. Rabindranath Tagore, *Nationalism*.

<sup>60</sup> Rabindranath Tagore, "H. G. Wells and Tagore," in Mohit K. Ray, ed., *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore, Volume VIII: Miscellaneous Writing*, pp.1237-1241.

<sup>61</sup> It is well known that Liang Qichao was a strong supporter of nationalism to remedy the lack of unification of the Chinese people. Tagore, on the other hand, stressed the specificity of each race but insisted on his opposition to nationalism, which derived from modern Western history. Obviously, the difference in historical backgrounds between China and India obliged intellectuals in respective countries to adopt different views of nationalism. This issue deserves more discussion.



traditionalist; on the contrary, his criticism of modern Western civilization was chiefly based on humanistic rather than ideological grounds. Furthermore, Tagore was also rational enough to appreciate the merits of Western culture while censuring the parts that disenchanted him. Moreover, in one of his dialogues with the French novelist Romain Rolland, Tagore even remarked that the gravest problem of Indian religious culture is “an indiscriminate spirit of toleration that all forms of religious creeds and crudities have run riot in India, making it difficult for us to realize the true foundation of our spiritual faith.” Therefore a purge was deemed necessary by Tagore for India to return to its true spiritual heritage.<sup>62</sup> As to the means for reform, Tagore believed that the introduction of scientific rationalism into India could probably be effective. Here Tagore showed a view similar to that of Hu Shi. Tagore thought that Indians “can never believe in mere intellectual determination for any long period of time,” but a temporary emphasis on science could serve to reverse the swing and lead to its final harmonization.<sup>63</sup> Although this dialogue contained no specifics, Tagore put these ideas into practice through his long-term educational work. Thus viewed, it is clear that Tagore’s thought is broad enough to defy any simplification, which was not only well expressed but also put into action.

Unfortunately, what is also obvious is that the richness of Tagore’s thought was largely manifested in the context of his interaction with Western intellectuals. As indicated in the introduction, in China, Tagore overemphasized the notion of the “East” and focused his discourse too narrowly, which also unwittingly involved him in the cultural debate long raging in China. Decades later, when researchers look back to the legacy left by Tagore, they are mainly concerned with his 1924 visit, comparing Tagore’s lectures with the views of Chinese polemicists, thus disregarding other peripheral but inspiring texts and failing to take Tagore’s interaction with the West into consideration. Critically, a thorough reexamination of Tagore’s relationship with modern Chinese intellectual history requires another study, that is, a comparison of Tagore with other foreign thinkers who also visited China in the 1920s such as Bertrand Russell and John Dewey, to explore their views of the East-West paradigm and their respective advice for a China struggling to modernize. This task has been

---

<sup>62</sup> Rabindranath Tagore, “Romand Rolland and Tagore,” in Mohit K. Ray, ed., *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore, Volume VIII: Miscellaneous Writing*, p.1223.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p.1224.

undertaken in Chapter 5.

### 6.5 Future Prospects for Studies on “Tagore and China”

In a 1922 letter from Feng Youlan to Liang Shuming, there is an observation that “although Tagore’s books are loved by general readers, very few references to him can be found in philosophical journals and discussions.”<sup>64</sup> Liang Shuming was also perceptive concerning the way Tagore became popular:

His [i.e. Tagore’s] ability lies in his catering to the modern Western psyche. Westerners are suffering greatly from [too much] rationality, and he is able to save them with intuition...He is good at expressing intuition without resorting to rational arguments, so he talks nothing about philosophy but merely composes poetry...In this way, he moves people easily, improving their intuition and suppressing their rationality. Thus people do not bother to criticize the fallacies in his philosophy, but admire the nobility of his thought.<sup>65</sup>

Tagore himself, however, always claimed to be a poet rather than a philosopher, not to mention a prophet. It has been shown that, during the 1920 conversation, Tagore’s remarks left an impression on Feng Youlan. But when examining the development of his own philosophical system, Feng assigned no special role to Tagore and regarded him as a mere representative of the dichotomous view of spiritual *versus* materialistic civilizations.<sup>66</sup> Feng seems to have forgotten his earlier appreciation for Tagore’s monism; close reading of Tagore’s works shows that Feng’s later characterization is unfair. Admittedly, the aim of Tagore was not a delicate system of knowledge, but an integration of the human body, mind, and soul, and harmony between the spirit and the material. Nonetheless, Tagore’s conversation with Albert Einstein confirms the coherence of his humanistic thought, which is not less persuasive than the arguments of the great modern physicist.<sup>67</sup> Therefore, when Hu Shi reduced

---

<sup>64</sup> Feng Youlan, “Zhi Liang Shuming,” in *Sansongtang quanji*, Vol.14, p.590.

<sup>65</sup> Liang Shuming, *Dongxi wenhua jiqi zhixue*, p.234.

<sup>66</sup> Feng Youlan, *Sansongtang zixu*, in *Sansongtang quanji*, Vol.1, p.173.

<sup>67</sup> Rabindranath Tagore, “Einstein and Tagore,” in Mohit K. Ray, ed., *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore, Volume VIII: Miscellaneous Writing*, pp.1241-1250.

Tagore's thought to "criticism of the materialistic West and eulogy of the spiritual East," he was engaging in oversimplification.

Hu Shi's evaluation of Tagore was shared by the majority of Chinese people in the 1920s. Indeed, around the time of Tagore's visit to China, some articles appeared in newspapers and magazines introducing his literary idea and philosophical thought. However, apart from daily reports of Tagore's itinerary and activities, most of what was written about him was either enthusiastic praise or fierce criticism. It is no exaggeration to say that Tagore became a battlefield in the cultural debate in China starting from the mid 1910s. It is natural for such a controversial event to draw critical attention, but the outcome was far-reaching and profound: most studies on Tagore conducted in China since then make little reference to other issues than the debates, which lead to an astonishing overlap of research.

As argued repeatedly in previous sections, mere focus on the cultural debate deprives Tagore studies in China of both breadth and depth. The only methodology that has been employed is to compare Tagore's lectures in China with the remarks of other Chinese thinkers, thus omitting both the temporal and spatial dimensions of Tagore's interaction with intellectuals worldwide. This chapter has examined instead the interconnection between the thought of Tagore, Feng Youlan, Liang Shuming, and other Chinese opinion leaders in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. By contrasting this interconnection with Tagore's interaction with contemporary Western thinkers, it is hoped that a new perspective will emerge to reveal the depth of intellectual exchange that has been obscured by visceral debate. This chapter has also attempted to provide a more vivid image of Tagore than that of a repetitive preacher of Eastern civilization. Of course, it is undeniable that Tagore was responsible for his own unsavory image in China. The Nobel Prize gave him an easy pass to communicate his thought to the whole world, but this reputation also molded him into a "spokesperson of the East," who was first and foremost expected to provide a spiritual remedy to the Western psyche. It was in this atmosphere that Tagore visited China in 1924. As his discourse was based on the cultural experiences of India and intended for Western audiences, it ultimately simplified the political, social, historical, and cultural complexities of China; therefore, it is almost inevitable that Chinese intellectuals reduced the richness of Tagore's thought to mere cultural conservatism. After the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949,

Chinese academia was overwhelmed for a long period with political ideology, which produced confusing results: some articles that bear seeming titles of Tagore studies are in reality verbal attacks on ideological enemies. Fortunately, reform and the opening of China from the 1980s have restored considerable freedom and autonomy to academic research.

A final point worth mentioning is that, even though Tagore's thought is underestimated in China, from the perspective of cultural history, his difficult friendship with China constitutes nothing less than an episode of significance. The short-term purpose of Tagore's visit to China to propose an Eastern spiritual civilization ended in failure. Nevertheless, Tagore's effort to define and enrich such ideas as the East or Asia a century ago appears as an intellectual feat in modern world history, which becomes all the more relevant in this age that is witnessing the rise of Asia. Many studies have been conducted in this field with frequent contributions from Chinese-speaking scholars. With celebrations of the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Tagore's birth and the many cultural and academic events that have followed, Tagore's artistic, intellectual, and educational legacies are receiving much needed critical reevaluation on a global scale.



## Part IV

### Asia in World Historical Narratives



## 7. On or Near the Axis: Construction of East Asia's Cultural Image in a Comparative Frame

### 7.1 Theoretical Setting

#### 7.1.1 Objective

Part I of this dissertation focuses on the formulation of Rabindranath Tagore's East-West paradigm, which demonstrates both his resistance to ostensible Western superiority and his inheritance of Western imagination. Parts II and III contextualize Tagore in modern intellectual histories of Japan and China, revealing how Tagore's Asian project was received in the East *per se*. This final part takes a broader view of how China, Japan, and India—three of the main Asian actors—have been characterized in modern world historical narratives. Chapter 7 starts with an analysis of the contrasting images of China and Japan in a theoretical framework of world history, that is, the “axial age theory.” Currently prevalent in academia, however, the theory presumes the supremacy of a Western mode of modernity, which leads to very different characterizations (and even evaluations) of China and Japan in the framework. Following the highly theoretical exploration, Chapter 8 examines different kinds of world historical narratives during the modern era. As will be demonstrated, West-centricity poses as a paradigm to attach to or rebel against in those narratives.

With increased interaction between the East and West since the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, how to define and delineate “East Asia” on the cultural, political, and economic map of the world has become an imperative issue of mutual recognition and self-identity. This chapter focuses on the paradigm of “axial age civilizations” to examine an image of China that has been constructed on a theoretical level since the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This image is illustrative in two senses: first, it originated in a specific intellectual milieu and with concomitant motives; second, this cultural image of China appears biased when compared with that of Japan constructed within the same frame. The first purpose of this chapter is to examine the content and politics of the axial age theory to explicate this bias; the second purpose is to modify the model and adapt it to East Asia as a counterpart to an overarching West.



The term “axial age” was coined by Karl Jaspers in *The Origin and Purpose of History* published in 1949, which expounds that mutually independent spiritual breakthroughs occurred from 800 BCE to 200 BCE in China, India, Greece, Israel, and Persia. Such breakthroughs not only left an indelible impact on each civilization, but also, as some scholars argue, shaped each culture’s approach towards modernity.<sup>1</sup> Simple as it seems, this statement is historically conditioned and theoretically premised. Before articulating the theory and its characterization of China and Japan, the notion of “East Asia” must be explored as its complexity defies any simplistic attempt to parallel great traditions or to generalize transnational cultures.

### 7.1.2 East Asia as a Research Paradigm

In the field of East Asian cultural interaction studies, the assumption is held that study of historical cultural exchange among East Asian members should not be confined to “regional studies” that became institutionalized in Western academia, especially in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Rather, the new discipline emphasizes construction of a historically verifiable, geographically facilitated community that has been propelled by a momentum towards a common cultural manifestation with critical local differences. This construction of regional history provides a solid ground for the project of a new world history that is to be understood in the spirit of cultural dialogue and in the context of globalization. More importantly, as a paradigm for the study of regional history, the notion of East Asia assumes a special role in the task of de-Westernization, which is gradually gaining prevalence in contemporary academic circles. On the one hand, East Asian countries have developed *sui generis* traditions that are not necessarily compatible with Western historical experiences and the theories derived therefrom. On the other hand, from a more practical view, although the modern history of East Asia has been strongly shaped by Western impact, most of its domain was not subject to the colonial rule of Western powers, and the tenacity and flexibility of some of East Asia’s

---

<sup>1</sup> Jaspers attributed the axial age breakthroughs occurring in many parts of the world to some central figures: in China, Confucius, Laozi, and all other philosophical schools; in India, interpreters of the Upanishads and Buddha; in Iran, Zoroaster; in Palestine, the prophets; in Greece, Homer, and the great philosophers, and the great tragedians. All of these figures emerged almost simultaneously in each region without knowledge of each other’s existence. See Karl Jaspers, *The Origin and Goal of History*, p.2. Jaspers’ list seems to be longer than what is widely acknowledged.

traditional thinking and behavioral modes are still visible today. This phenomenon facilitates the possibility of reinvigoration and the potential to transform long-dominant Western values.

However, there must be critical awareness that “East Asia” is a rather artificial notion. Whatever geographical or cultural bonds East Asian countries might share historically, it has been argued that the slogan of East Asia became coextensive with anti-Western rhetoric in China, Korea, and especially in Japan in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, as Koyasu Nobukuni 子安宣邦 comments:

“East Asia” is by no means a self-evident geographical concept, but one which is endowed with strong historicity. It was constructed in the 1920s by imperial Japan as a cultural-geographical idea.<sup>2</sup>

In other words, the notion of East Asia, being an idea of space assuming some shared legacies among its members, also came to embody a strong sense of “modernity,” which is a concept of time. It is this temporal dimension that complicates the question of legitimacy of East Asia as a entity, for history demonstrates that its two main actors, China and Japan, have had very different experiences in the pursuit of modernity despite the cultural bond between the two countries. Given the limited space, only China and Japan will be discussed in this chapter, with Korea and Vietnam being excluded.<sup>3</sup> But later argument will justify that the idea of East Asia—conventionally called the Sinocentric world—becomes both prominent and problematic because of Japan’s continual emulation of and challenge to the Chinese axis. In view of the contrasting experiences of modernization between China and Japan, any assumption about East Asia is in need of fundamental examination, or it will merely include regional countries without synthesizing their context-specific dynamics in history. Nevertheless, any attempt at synthesis might also risk oversimplification when the focus is modernity, for this idea is extraneous to East Asian cultures but tends to constitute a teleological process in contemporary narratives.

---

<sup>2</sup> Koyasu Nobukuni, “*Ajia*” wa dō katararetekita ka: *kindai Nihon no orientarizumu* 「アジア」はどう語られてきたか—近代日本のオリエンタリズム (How “Asia” has been Narrated: Orientalism in Modern Japan) (Tokyo: Fujiwara Shoten, 2003), pp.177-178.

<sup>3</sup> While India is not conventionally included in the discussions on East Asia, the importance of Indian civilization in the making of an “East Asian cultural circle” will be touched upon in the last section.

Critically, the spatial dimension of East Asia becomes prominent when its temporal dimension—expressed in terms of responses to Western modernity—is taken into consideration. Such intertwining of spatiality and temporality, however, is embedded and almost naturalized in much of the discourse on East Asia. For instance, in *East Asia: Tradition and Transformation*, the authors begin their narrative with the following statement:

Our story divides naturally into two major phases: the evolution of traditional East Asian civilization in relative isolation over three thousand years, and the upheavals and transformation of that civilization in recent times partly in response to contact with the modern Western world.<sup>4</sup>

To paraphrase this statement figuratively, while East Asia and the West can be generally considered as two separate spheres of culture and life, the boundaries of the former, an area remarkable for its illustrious tradition, became necessary when threatened by the latter, which has embodied the momentum of world history since the modern era. These seemingly unbridgeable dichotomies between tradition and modernity, and East and West, find clear expression in the axial age theory. This is not particularly surprising as both of the ideas—East Asia in the modern sense and the axial age—received conceptual forms roughly at the same time and were guided by similar considerations. Therefore, while this theory provides a comparative frame in which different civilizations can be characterized in terms of common criteria and evaluated in relation to each other, it shares some ideological assumptions with most discourses produced from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, which have equated the idea of East Asia or the East with past glory vis-à-vis an evolving West.

### **7.1.3 China on the Axis *versus* Japan near the Axis**

As mentioned above, “axial age” appeared as a theoretical term in 1949 in Karl Jaspers’ work. However, the importance of this historical period had already been recognized by Max Weber (1864-1920) in his comparative study of world religions (this lineage will be detailed later). Yu Ying-shih also points out

---

<sup>4</sup> John K. Fairbank, Edwin O. Reischauer, and Albert M. Craig, *East Asia: Tradition and Transformation, Revised Edition*, p.3.

that the Chinese scholar and poet, Wen Yiduo 聞一多 (1899-1946), had noted in a 1943 article the almost simultaneous awakening of literary creativity in China, India, Israel, and Greece.<sup>5</sup>

Whatever the origin of the notion, the theory of axial age civilizations has been discussed extensively and has undergone critical development in recent decades. Since China constitutes one of the axes, and has long been an enormous “other” for neighboring East Asian countries even during the turbulent 20<sup>th</sup> century, this chapter will show the distinct features of Chinese civilization characterized by this model. Significantly, what will become manifest in the coming analysis is that different interpretations of the Chinese axis tend to unwittingly at times reinforce the premises of the axial age theory. Such arguments, in brief, hail West European modernity and pay merely passing attention to the traditional achievements of non-Western civilizations. This ideology is used to depict Japan as a brilliant latecomer on the stage of world history, in sharp contrast to the stereotype of a traditionally-bound China.

Despite Japan’s history of aggression in the modern era, there is no denying that it was an active and receptive member in the historical Sinocentric system. Japanese cultural assimilation, however, was eclectic; it is not typically labeled as Confucian or Buddhist, two of the pillars of Chinese civilization. Instead, the combination of an eclectic spirit with indigenous elements often earns Japan an epithet of “unique.” Therefore, in view of the heterogeneity between Chinese and Japanese cultures, an inevitable question emerges as to

---

<sup>5</sup> Yu Ying-shih, “Zhouxin tupo he liyue chuantong” 軸心突破和禮樂傳統 (Axial Breakthrough and the Tradition of Ritual and Music), in *Twenty-First Century*, No.58 (Apr, 2000), pp.18. This article has a complex history. It was first written in 1999 in English as “Between the Heavenly and the Human: An Essay on Origins of the Chinese Mind in Classical Antiquity.” This paper was later condensed and incorporated into a 2003 collection, *Confucian Spirituality*, and the title was shortened to “Between the Heavenly and the Human.” The second section of the 1999 article was translated into Chinese and included in the Hong Kong based journal *Twenty-First Century* (April, 2000), which was reproduced in a 2007 volume published in Taiwan. The English essay was translated in its entirety into Chinese around 2010, and this new Chinese version was revised and published in Taiwan in 2012 as “Tianren zhiji: Zhongguo gudaisixiang de qiyuan shitan” 天人之際—中國古代思想的起源試探 (Between the Heavenly and the Human: An Exploration of the Origins of Ancient Chinese Thought), in Chen Jo-shui 陳弱水 ed., *Zhongguoshi xinlun: sixiangshi fence* 中國史新論—思想史分冊 (New Interpretations of Chinese History: The Intellectual History Volume) (Taipei: Linking Publishing, 2012), pp.11-93. Eventually, a monograph on this topic has come out in 2014. For the purpose of this chapter, the 2000 Hong Kong source is used since other articles contained in the same forum are also referenced. For the condensed version of Yu’s English article, see Tu Wei-ming and Mary Evelyn Tucker eds., *Confucian Spirituality*, Volume One (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2003), pp.62-80. The Chinese version reproduced in 2007 is included in *Zhishiren yu Zhongguo wenhua de jiazhi* 知識人與中國文化的價值 (Intellectuals and the Value of Chinese Culture) (Taipei: China Times Press, 2007), pp.69-95.

how their different paths towards modernity developed in their own historical contexts despite the geographical proximity, and how much each country's tradition weighed in its approach towards modernity.

One of the most interesting and unconventional efforts to probe into Japan's uniqueness was made by the late Israeli sociologist S. N. Eisenstadt, who depicts Japanese civilization in terms of the axial age breakthrough:

The distinctiveness of Japan lies in its being the only non-Axial civilization that maintained—throughout its history, up to the modern time—a history of its own, without becoming in some way marginalized by the Axial civilizations, China and Korea, Confucianism and Buddhism, with which it was in continuous contact.<sup>6</sup>

On the other hand, Japanese civilization also “did exhibit some of the structural characteristics...that can be found in Axial Age civilization.”<sup>7</sup> While Eisenstadt's theory will be elaborated later, here it is sufficient to point out that the distinctness of Japanese culture lies in its quick success in modernizing, a success that, in Eisenstadt's view, can only be achieved in those societies deriving directly from the axial civilizations. That is to say, Eisenstadt held that the two epochal changes are structurally and ideologically bound together, and that Japan forms an extraordinary case for its independence from this bond.

Methodologically speaking, Eisenstadt studied Japan's traditions to explain its successful modernization, and this problematique obliged him to conduct research in a comparative frame: the success of Japan to transform tradition into modernity *versus* the lack of success of many other axial and non-axial civilizations to “complete” the transformation.<sup>8</sup> In the following sections the general idea of the axial age theory will be explored, as well as its application to China—one of the few axial civilizations—and Japan—the most renowned non-axial civilization of prominence in the modern world. By approaching the Chinese and Japanese cases thematically, two types of

---

<sup>6</sup> S. N. Eisenstadt, *Japanese Civilization: A Comparative View* (Chicago and London: The U of Chicago P, 1996), p.14. Here Korean culture is simplified to being subordinate to Chinese civilization.

<sup>7</sup> S. N. Eisenstadt, *Power, Structure, and Meaning: Essays in Sociological Theory and Analysis* (Chicago and London: The U of Chicago P, 1995), p.27.

<sup>8</sup> S. N. Eisenstadt, *Japanese Civilization: A Comparative View*, p.15.

unevenness—ideological and structural—inherent in the axial age theory will become apparent, which prevent it from becoming an effective paradigm for the comparative study of civilizations, especially in terms of a synthetic description of non-Western cultural spheres such as East Asia.

## 7.2 The Axial Age Breakthrough and the Chinese Case

### 7.2.1 Basic Characteristics of the Axial Age

Karl Jaspers' and Benjamin Schwartz's (1916-1999) views are representative of the essence of the axial age theory: while the former proposed the theory, the latter contributed to its dissemination in the United States.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, Schwartz's specialty, Chinese intellectual history, balances Jaspers' proposition, which was formulated in the tradition of Western philosophy.

To begin with, although the axial age civilizations followed mutually independent paths towards spiritual breakthroughs during the period from 800 BCE to 200 BCE, there was indeed a common ground:

What is new about this age...is that man becomes conscious of Being as a whole, of himself and his limitations...By consciously recognizing his limits he sets himself the highest goals. He experiences absoluteness in the depths of selfhood and in the lucidity of transcendence.<sup>10</sup>

This process receives Schwartz's critical elaboration in what is now considered a classic statement of the axial age:

If there is nevertheless some common underlying impulse in all these "axial" movements, it might be called the strain toward transcendence...a kind of standing back and looking beyond – a kind of

---

<sup>9</sup> The Spring, 1975 issue of *Daedalus: The Journal of the American Academy of Arts and Science* (Vol.104, No.2) is dedicated to a forum of "Wisdom, Revelation, and Doubt – Perspectives on the First Millennium B.C." Schwartz is known to be the organizer of this discussion. As noted by Yu Ying-shih, this issue brought discussion of the axial age to public attention in American academia. See Yu Ying-shih, "Zhouxin tupo he liyue chuantong," in *Twenty-First Century* (Apr, 2000), pp.17.

<sup>10</sup> Karl Jaspers, *The Origin and Goal of History*, p.2.

critical, reflective questioning of the actual and a new vision of what lies beyond.<sup>11</sup>

In Jasper's own terms, with crystallization of human rationality, the axial age bid farewell to the "mythical age."<sup>12</sup> However, Schwartz was more reserved about usage of the term for fear that "more definite concepts such as 'individualism' or 'freedom' or 'rationality' might involve the hasty universalization of specifically Western concepts of transcendence."<sup>13</sup>

As mentioned in the introduction, coinage of the "axial age" by Jaspers does not mean that he was the first person to perceive the significance of this historical period. Indeed, from his examination and criticism of many different explanations of the cause of these simultaneous breakthroughs in remotely separated areas, it is evident that this issue had been thoroughly discussed prior to Jaspers' own research; he simply readdressed the problem with his own explication. Finding no obvious evidence of mutual influences among China, India, and West Asia in ancient times, Jaspers seemed satisfied merely with discovery of the mysterious simultaneity as long as it continued inspiring research.<sup>14</sup> Schwartz expressed a similar opinion more forcefully:

The interest of these observations does not lie primarily in the very rough "contemporaneity" of these developments or in speculations about mutual influence....What one rather senses are areas of common concern and dissatisfaction with prevailing states of affairs. Yet the search for new meanings in all these civilizations continues to be refracted through preexistent cultural orientations.<sup>15</sup>

Jaspers himself was not unaware of the heritage passed down from the previous era to the axial age. However, for him the epochal breakthroughs were so profound and radical that anything surviving the transformation seemed to show more selectivity than continuity:

---

<sup>11</sup> Benjamin Schwartz, "The Age of Transcendence," in *Daedalus*, Vol.104, No.2 (Spring, 1975), pp.1-7.

<sup>12</sup> Karl Jaspers, *The Origin and Goal of History*, pp.2-3.

<sup>13</sup> Benjamin Schwartz, "The Age of Transcendence," in *Daedalus*, Vol.104, No.2 (Spring, 1975), p.3. Schwartz's view of the pre-axial Chinese cosmology is described in 2.2.

<sup>14</sup> Karl Jaspers, *The Origin and Goal of History*, p.18.

<sup>15</sup> Benjamin Schwartz, "The Age of Transcendence," in *Daedalus*, Vol.104, No.2 (Spring, 1975), p.3.

The thousands of years of old ancient civilizations are everywhere brought to an end by the Axial Period...The ancient cultures only persist in those elements which enter into the Axial Period and become part of the beginning.<sup>16</sup>

Indeed, older traditions earned continued admiration but mainly as constitutive elements of the new spirit; for satisfying the needs of the latter, the meaning of the former was subject to transmutation. Most significantly, from a long-range perspective, the axial age does not exert one-way influence but extends its impact to both ends of the time line. Spiritual awakening towards the transcendental order and self-reflectivity eventually forms a so-called sense of history, by whose standards every development before or after this axial age is measured.<sup>17</sup> Thus Jaspers asserts that “from it world history receives the only structure and unity that has endured—at least until our own time.”<sup>18</sup> For all later generations, “return to this beginning is the ever-recurrent event in China, India and the West.”<sup>19</sup> This primacy of the axial age does not, of course, preclude greatness or the novelty of later achievements. However, as Schwartz concludes: “The age of which we speak established a range of thought that was to shape all future developments without predetermining them.”<sup>20</sup>

The basic concepts of the axial age theory have been outlined by comparing Jaspers’ and Schwartz’s views. This broad description naturally engenders different degrees of elaboration in accordance with different perspectives and concerns, which can be further specified as follows:

1. Context-specific relationship between preceding cultures and the axial age civilizations.
2. Rise and gradual solidification of the stratum of intellectuals who were the carriers of the transcendental view, sometimes in various versions.
3. Crystallization of transcendent views and their institutionalization.
4. Influence of axial age civilization on modernity.

---

<sup>16</sup> Karl Jaspers, *The Origin and Goal of History*, pp.6-7.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p.20.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p.8.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p.7.

<sup>20</sup> Benjamin Schwartz, “Transcendence in Ancient China,” in *Daedalus*, Vol.104, No.2 (Spring, 1975), p.68.



While these considerations are not absent from Jaspers' work, they must be developed with the help of specialists in various fields. Specifically, the first two questions address the background of the axial age breakthrough, which mainly belong to historical studies. The next two questions focus on the effect of the breakthrough and are of particular sociological importance. As the argument unfolds, it will become clear that these two approaches—historical and sociological—seem not yet to have reached a mutual accommodation, and this proves to be the core problem of the current frame of axial age theory.

### 7.2.2 The Axial Age Breakthrough in China: A Historical View

To answer the first two questions raised above, this section focuses on the arguments of two prominent scholars of Chinese intellectual history—Benjamin Schwartz and Yu Ying-shih—to examine their characterization of the axial age breakthrough in China. Their arguments are taken as exemplary because both offer relatively balanced accounts of the different schools of thought rather than focus exclusively on Confucianism.

As previously mentioned, Jaspers regarded the axial age not only as a yardstick to measure past achievements but also as a percolator through which only the parts essential to its spiritual reformulation are kept. Such treatment might be a bit too definitive in distinguishing the axial age from preceding traditions, especially in the case of China, whose breakthrough is commonly known as the most conservative among major civilizations.

According to Schwartz, the cultural image of ancient China is a rather “un-mythic” one. What is demonstrated in the classic writings is “the image of an all-embracing, socio-political and cultural order in which men relate to each other in terms of a structured system of roles—familial and political.”<sup>21</sup> In this system, spirits and deities still occupy certain places but are all subject to an arrangement in which the human and cosmic orders are in constant communication. To maintain a harmonious relationship between the two orders, proper performance of ritual by leaders is of critical importance. On the other hand, if they stray far from the *Dao* 道, all features of a disordered society will

---

<sup>21</sup> Benjamin Schwartz, “Transcendence in Ancient China,” in *Daedalus*, Vol.104, No.2 (Spring, 1975), p.58.

become manifest.<sup>22</sup> Ontologically, this *Dao* is not merely an idealistic imagination but, at least for Confucius and other past sages, used to be perfectly embodied in the human world. That is to say, when Confucius raised some fundamental questions for the world, a political and moral paradigm had already been in existence. He did not need to undergo “a process of dialectic ratiocination in the manner of Plato.”<sup>23</sup>

On the eve of the axial age, since the socio-cosmic order had been prescribed and the paradigm lay already in the not too distant past, the contribution Confucius made to the breakthrough, according to Schwartz, is “a new focus on the subjective or inner side of the moral-spiritual life” that seeks to achieve “the inner moral perfection called *jen* [i.e. *ren* 仁].”<sup>24</sup> This inner morality, if well cultivated and outwardly expressed, should be in accord with the normative cultural and social order that embodies the harmonious relationship between human beings, and between humans and heaven, although such an ideal order was hardly ever achieved in history, which accounts for the tragedy of Confucius. He was never held in high regard by the government, and was thus denied the chance of implementing the *Dao* for society.

In sharp contrast to Confucianism, Daoism takes the prescribed socio-political order not as part of the *Dao*, but as an artificial human construct. Such an approach represents “a classical ‘primitivist’ critique of all ‘higher civilization’,” thus also representing “the most radical expression of transcendence in China” until the arrival of Buddhism.<sup>25</sup> Mohism, in Schwartz’s view, aims to achieve good order not by resorting to inner perfection, but by strenuously searching for the active moral will of the gods. Therefore, the Mohist idea constitutes a reaction “against the tendency to associate the transcendent with the notion of an immanent cosmic and social order.”<sup>26</sup>

---

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p.59.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p.61.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p.63. Chang Hao 張灏 questions Schwartz’s dating and characterization of the Chinese axial age by arguing that the seeds of breakthrough emerged later than Schwartz had assumed, and that some mythic factors—especially in relation to correlative cosmology—were still prevalent after the breakthrough. Chang’s basic recognition, however, of the Confucian spirit does not diverge from that of Schwartz: a turning inward for achieving transcendence. See Chang Hao, “Some Reflections on the Problems of the Axial-Age Breakthrough in Relation to Classical Confucianism,” in Paul A. Cohen, Merle Goldman eds., *Ideas across Cultures: Essays on Chinese Thought in Honor of Benjamin I. Schwartz* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1990), pp.17-31.

<sup>25</sup> Benjamin Schwartz, “Transcendence in Ancient China,” in *Daedalus*, Vol.104, No.2 (Spring, 1975), p.66.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p.67.

Among other schools, Legalism demonstrates an anti-inward-looking and anti-transcendental tendency in its absolute emphasis on technical questions for constructing an effective socio-political order. The formation of such a tendency is only natural for the emerging warring states in their competition for resources and administrative efficiency. In this light, both Confucian and Daoist transcendentalisms may be viewed as “reactionary” in relation to this actuality of the time:

It would be wrong to think of the transcendental factor as simply a reaction against a static and unreflective traditionalism. It may, on the contrary, have been in part a reaction against the rationalizing, “progressive” tendencies of higher civilization.<sup>27</sup>

In contrast to Schwartz’s portrait of the ideological orientation of the Chinese axial age breakthrough, Yu Ying-shih’s account gives more historical specifics necessary for an understanding of the cultural dynamics of ancient China.

Differing slightly from Schwartz’s view of an “un-mythic” world, Yu specifies that what prevailed in the pre-axial Chinese tradition was “Wu-shamanism.” The hereditary *Wu* 巫 not only acted as powerful mediators between human beings and ancestral spirits or natural deities, but also monopolized the interpretation of “the Way of Heaven.” What the awakened philosophers and their emerging schools commonly struggled against was this monopoly, and their efforts brought about two fundamental transformations: the replacement of the *Dao* for gods, and emphasis on the human mind’s perceptivity rather than on the *Wu*’s divination and ritual performance. Subsequent to the axial age breakthrough, “study of the mind” (心學) rose to such prominence that it became the Chinese counterpart to Western theology.<sup>28</sup>

Historically, Yu attributes the cause of such a breakthrough to the “disintegration of the order of ritual and music (禮壞樂崩).” Since “ritual and music” formed the entire repertoire of official knowledge in ancient China, this “disintegration” directly gave rise to the “flourishing of and competition among

---

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p.68.

<sup>28</sup> Yu Ying-shih, *Renwen yu minzhu* 人文與民主 (Humanities and Democracy) (Taipei: China Times Press, 2010), p.154.

hundreds of (private) schools (百家爭鳴),” with each major school elaborating its own critical relationship with the tradition of ritual and music.<sup>29</sup> This view is reminiscent of Jasper’s description of the phenomenal rise of new disciplines in the axial age:

Spiritual conflicts arose, accompanied by attempts to convince others through the communication of thoughts, reasons and experience...In this age were born the fundamental categories within which we still think today.<sup>30</sup>

Furthermore, the rise of intellectuals as a social class did not fail to draw Jaspers’ attention:

For the first time *philosophers* appeared. Human beings dared to rely on themselves as individuals...Man proved capable of contrasting himself inwardly with the entire universe.<sup>31</sup>

In Schwartz’s words, those self-reflective individuals constitute the “creative minorities.” They are “no longer ‘cultural specialists’ who simply expound the established ‘rules’ of their cultures. Even when they continue to accept the ‘rules,’ they often see them in an entirely new light.”<sup>32</sup> The creative minorities are exactly those self-appointed carriers of the *Dao* in ancient China of which Yu argues.<sup>33</sup>

Yu’s view of Confucian and Daoist contributions to the Chinese axial age breakthrough is similar to that of Schwartz’s but is explicated in more concrete terms. Specifically, he attributes the term “inward transcendence” (內向超越) to the Chinese type of breakthrough.<sup>34</sup> For Confucianism, Yu argues that by

---

<sup>29</sup> Yu Ying-shih, *Zhongguo zhishi jieceng shilun: gudai pian* 中國知識階層史論—古代篇 (Historical Analysis of the Chinese Intellectual Class: The Ancient Period) (Taipei: Linking Publishing, 1980), p.30.

<sup>30</sup> Karl Jaspers, *The Origin and Goal of History*, p.2.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p.3.

<sup>32</sup> Benjamin Schwartz, *The World of Thought in Ancient China* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1985), p.3.

<sup>33</sup> Yu Ying-shih, *Zhongguo zhishi jieceng shilun: gudai pian*, pp.38-57.

<sup>34</sup> Yu Ying-shih, “Zhouxin tupo he liyue chuantong,” in *Twenty-First Century*, No.58 (Apr, 2000), p.19. For a more thorough discussion, see Yu Ying-shih’s “Cong jiazhi xitong kan Zhongguo wenhua de xiandai yiyi” 從價值系統看中國文化的現代意義 (The Modern Meaning of Chinese Culture: Viewing from the Value System), in *Zhishiren yu Zhongguo wenhua de jiazhi*, pp.9-68. The issue of Chinese “inward transcendence” versus Western “outward

reinterpreting the archaic tradition of ritual and music, Confucius infused *ren* into the spiritual core of the prescribed ritual behaviors, although it must be added that such prioritization does not lessen the social significance of ritual.<sup>35</sup> For Daoism, Yu also focuses on its primitivist character. In the Daoist classics *Laozi* and *Zhuangzi* 莊子, a clear path for returning to the original *Dao* from modern degeneration is presented: first, forget ritual and music; next, forget *ren* and *yi* 義 (righteousness). Yu argues that it is because the *Dao* in the Daoist characterization is transcendental and beyond any prescription that one must forget conventional knowledge to approach it. However, such forgetting is by no means a negation but—borrowing a famous metaphor from *Zhuangzi*—the disposing of tools after the goal is reached.<sup>36</sup> As argued by Schwartz as well, neither Laozi nor Zhuangzi were revolutionaries. “They take for granted the society in which they live, and would simply minimize its effects on the life of the individual.”<sup>37</sup>

While Schwartz recognized a kind of dissociation between Mohist transcendence and the immanent cosmic and social order presumed by the Confucians, Yu perceives that Mozi’s criticism of the tradition of ritual and music is based on such an assumption: there existed in high antiquity a pure and primitive lifestyle that was becoming contaminated by the growing formality and luxury of later generations. Therefore, the ultimate reference of the socio-political order in Mozi’s thought is still an archaic tradition which, of course, is defined by a set of criteria different from the Confucian one.<sup>38</sup>

### 7.2.3 China in the Axial Age: A Critical Review

In the foregoing analysis of the Chinese axial age breakthrough, focus was on the two historically-oriented questions raised in 7.2.1, with the two sociologically-oriented questions being left to the next section. This is done to show that two contrasting types of reasoning are usually followed in narrating

---

transcendence” also receives responses and elaborations from, for example, Tang Yijie 湯一介, whose discussions on the immanence (內在性) and transcendence (超越性) of both Confucian and Daoist philosophies are inspired by Yu’s article. See Tang Yijie, *Xin zhouxin shidai yu Zhongguo wenhua de jiangou* 新軸心時代與中國文化的建構 (New Axial Age and the Construction of Chinese Culture) (Nanchang: Jiangxi People’s Publishing House, 2007), p.2.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.22-23.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.26-27.

<sup>37</sup> Benjamin Schwartz, “Transcendence in Ancient China,” in *Daedalus*, Vol.104, No.2 (Spring, 1975), p.66.

<sup>38</sup> Yu Ying-shih, “Zhouxin tupo he liyue chuantong,” in *Twenty-First Century*, No.58 (Apr, 2000), pp.24-25.

the axial age theory.

As explained earlier, Schwartz's and Yu's arguments are referred to because they place the breakthrough in a broad intellectual spectrum. Methodologically speaking, as the axial age is claimed to have had great impact on later history, analysis of the source of such influence should be as in-depth and extensive as possible. However, since the axial age theory is presumed to account for the paths from tradition to modernity unique to those major civilizations, its ideological and institutional aspects receive most attention, which in China was almost exclusively Confucianism. Accordingly, it is only natural for most authors to neglect other philosophical schools when treating the issue of breakthrough in China. For instance, in 2000, the February and April issues of the Hong Kong-based journal *Twenty-First Century* held a forum on "Axial Civilizations and the 21<sup>st</sup> Century."<sup>39</sup> Most of the articles provide critical reflections on the axial age theory and on its implications for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. When it comes to China, discussions inevitably concentrate on Confucianism and the imperial order deriving from its institutionalization. But it should be noted that, while this approach makes the arguments more focused, they suffer from being incomprehensive.

Following this vein of argument, the next section will delve into a particularly ideological—rather than historical—characterization of the axial age breakthrough and its connection with modernity, in which the whole issue is "repackaged" to fit into a comparative framework that is more selective in terms of historical details and employs universal criteria to generalize particular events. By juxtaposing the two versions of the axial age theory, two purposes will be fulfilled in the last section: first, to point out the logic and assumptions of the axial age theory as well as its inherent limitations; second, to refine the argument and adapt it to the concept of East Asia.

### **7.3 Reformulation of the Axial Age Theory and Japanese Civilization**

#### **7.3.1 Japan as a Unique Civilization**

In contrast to the historical details presented in describing the axial age breakthrough in China, this section is theory-oriented with a view to drawing Japan into the framework of comparative civilizations. As previously mentioned,

---

<sup>39</sup> Many articles contained in the forum will be referred to later in this chapter.

Japan is included in this model because of its modern achievements. In other words, one cannot dwell on its tradition for the distinctness of this tradition is mainly illumined by its modernity. This is a very different case from China, whose illustrious tradition seems to justify it being a research topic in itself. This view is supported by the following statement, cited again from *East Asia: Tradition and Transformation*:

Japan, though sharing much culturally with China, Vietnam, and Korea, came to contrast sharply with them in social and political structure. Significantly, many of the differences between Japan and the other members of East Asian civilization turn out to be points of resemblance between Japan and the West...So also is Japan's more rapid modernization during the past century, which has produced closer parallels to the contemporary Occident than are to be found in China or anywhere else in Asia.<sup>40</sup>

This quote justifies an elaboration on an earlier argument, that is, the intertwining of spatiality and temporality that pervades much of the discourse on East Asia. Spatially speaking, it is obvious from the statement that East Asia and the West constitute two major reference systems for Japan, whose cultural hybridity and geographical separation earn it the ambiguous status of mediator between East and West. Temporally speaking, in the case of Japan, the division between a traditional East Asia and a modern West becomes particularly explicit, as the differences between Japan and other East Asian countries seem to account for Japan's rapid modernization. However, the uniqueness of the Japanese version of modernity often suggests a spiritual source in East Asian traditions, as evidenced by many publications on the possible relationship between Confucianism and capitalism.<sup>41</sup>

To sum up, the discontinuities between East Asia and the West, and between East Asia's tradition and modernity, becomes most conspicuous through the refraction of Japan's historical experience. The singularity of these experiences is very ambitiously raised to a theoretical level by some

---

<sup>40</sup> John K. Fairbank, Edwin O. Reischauer, and Albert M. Craig, *East Asia: Tradition and Transformation, Revised Edition*, p.324.

<sup>41</sup> For example, Tu Wei-ming ed., *Confucian Traditions in East Asian Modernity* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1996).

sociologists, including Eisenstadt and Johann Arnason, who argue that Japan constitutes “a civilization *sui generis*, unparalleled in other parts of the world.”<sup>42</sup> The following discussion will focus on Eisenstadt’s characterization of Japanese civilization. Before that, however, some effort must be made to trace the development of Eisenstadt’s thought and place him within the intellectual history that concerns the axial age theory.

### 7.3.2 Development of Eisenstadt’s Theory of Comparative Civilizations

In the development of the axial age theory, some main contributors are worth mentioning: Jaspers, originator of the term in 1949; Schwartz, organizer of the first large-scale discussion on the theory and its application to different civilizations in the 1970s; Eisenstadt, the most fervent theorizer who summoned two other international forums on the theory in the 1980s and 2000s.<sup>43</sup>

In hindsight, it can be said that the core issues of the two forums organized by Eisenstadt to a great extent reflect his own theoretical interests. They are the last two questions raised at the end of 7.2.1 respectively, namely, the crystallization of transcendent views and their institutionalization, and the influence of axial age civilization on modernity.

Eisenstadt’s own theoretical concern is very aptly expressed in the title of a 1973 publication, that is, *Tradition, Change, and Modernity*. Eisenstadt argued that although “modernity” poses to various societies a set of distinct problems requiring specific methods of response, in each society such responses to “modernity” may be similar to those already developed in previous historical periods.<sup>44</sup> That is to say, there are similarities and continuities in a society’s reactions to changes in history, including the change termed “modernization.” This line of argument foreshadows Eisenstadt’s later idea of “multiple modernities.” As different patterns of reaction to historical change create many distinct paths towards “modernity,” those paths cannot be considered as belonging to a uniform program. More importantly, such recognition of the

---

<sup>42</sup> Sugimoto Yoshio, *An Introduction to Japanese Society, the Third Edition*, pp.26-27.

<sup>43</sup> For a summary and evaluation in Chinese, see Yu Kwok Leung 余國樑, “Zhouxin wenmin taolun shuping” 軸心文明討論述評 (Description and Evaluation of the Discussions on Axial Civilizations), in *Twenty-First Century*, No.57 (February, 2000), pp.33-41. As Yu’s article predates the second forum convened by Eisenstadt, later critical development is introduced in this section.

<sup>44</sup> S. N. Eisenstadt, *Tradition, Change, and Modernity* (New York: A Wiley-Interscience Publication, 1973), pp.v-vii.



unique inner logic of each culture enabled Eisenstadt to trace the “multiple modernities” to their respective traditions, thus demanding a comparative framework for analyzing the dynamics of civilizations.<sup>45</sup>

Nevertheless, the view of “change” from “tradition” to “modernity” requires a progressive theorization, which is formulated around Eisenstadt’s continual elaboration of the axial age theory. As a sociologist, Eisenstadt generalized the axial age breakthroughs as follows:

1. Emergence of tension between the transcendental and mundane orders.
2. Attempt of a few intellectual elites to model the world upon a transcendental vision.
3. Successful institutionalization of the vision and an ensuing reordering of society.
4. Change in the dynamic of history.<sup>46</sup>

While a common historical cause of these breakthroughs is too controversial to be pinpointed conclusively,<sup>47</sup> what interested Eisenstadt was not the background but the unfolding and institutionalization of such cultural breakthroughs. A small group of intellectual elites were inspired to assume reflective attitudes towards human life and the cosmos. They felt compelled to bridge the gap between the two worlds by way of reconstructing human behavior, which now pursued some higher moral or metaphysical order, and then to maintain that formula. It was the different interpretations of the gap and the ensuing divergent programs of reconstruction, combined with specific social conditions that facilitated or obstructed such development, which resulted in the unique crystallization of each axial age civilization and “ushered in a new type

---

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p.6.

<sup>46</sup> See S. N. Eisenstadt, “Introduction: The Axial Age Breakthroughs: Their Characteristics and Origins,” in S. N. Eisenstadt ed., *The Origin and Diversity of Axial Age Civilizations* (New York: State U of New York P, 1986), especially pp.1-2. This summary is, however, my own.

<sup>47</sup> Among many attempts of this kind, Eric Weil’s “What Is a Breakthrough in History?” is possibly best known (also in the 1975 *Daedalus* forum, pp.21-36). However, Weil’s argument that breakthroughs follow breakdowns draws many criticisms. In Chinese academia, while Yu Ying-shih agrees with his observation in the Chinese case, both Chang Hao and Hsu Tso-yun 許倬雲 oppose its general applicability. See Yu Ying-shih, “Zhouxin tupo he liyue chuantong,” in *Twenty-First Century*, No.58 (Apr, 2000), p.21; Chang Hao, “Cong shijie wenhuashi kan shuzhou shidai” 從世界文化史看樞軸時代 (Viewing the Axial Age from Cultural History of the World), in *ibid.*, p.6; Hsu Tso-yun, *Zhongguo gudai wenhua de tezhi* 中國古代文化的特質 (Characteristics of Ancient Chinese Culture) (Taipei: Linking Publishing, 1988), pp.131-134.

of social and civilizational dynamic in the history of mankind.”<sup>48</sup>

Eisenstadt, like Yu Ying-shih, pays particular attention to emerging intellectual elites. They no longer saw themselves as performers of technical and functional activities, but as “autonomous carriers of a distinct cultural and social order related to the transcendental vision.” Furthermore, forming a new stratum, those intellectuals were closer to both the ruling and social powers, and were most active in reinterpreting the world and creating new establishments.<sup>49</sup>

As argued previously, no change in history is blind to its own tradition. Nevertheless, since the change that took place in the axial age was so radical that its subsequent institutionalization grew into sources from which every later development in history derived, the recent radical change of modernization cannot but be similar to it in structure. Following this logic, Eisenstadt claimed that only those civilizations that experienced the transcendental breakthrough are capable of self-transformation to modernity; other minor civilizations cannot trigger the transformation by themselves. However, for some structural reasons and historical contingencies, Western Europe as a combination of the Greek and Judaic axes is the only one that has completed this self-transformation (North American modernity is a variation thereof).<sup>50</sup> Such theorization of world civilizations, though ambitious and eloquent, is, nevertheless, made possible only by neglecting a myriad of context-specific historical details. As a historian, Yu Ying-shih also comments that Eisenstadt’s bold theoretical connection of modernity with the axial age does not sound quite convincing.<sup>51</sup>

In any case, one of the merits of Eisenstadt’s project is that he places modernity in a macro-historical perspective and distinguishes it as a unique historical force. Such distinctness of modernity does not prevent it from assuming plural forms, which are all variations of but by no means subject to the model of Western European modernity:

...Within all of them [i.e. respective traditions] developed distinct

---

<sup>48</sup> S. N. Eisenstadt, “Introduction: The Axial Age Breakthroughs: Their Characteristics and Origins,” in S. N. Eisenstadt ed., *The Origin and Diversity of Axial Age Civilizations*, pp.3-4.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p.5.

<sup>50</sup> For an epitome of the argument presented here, see S. N. Eisenstadt, “Preface,” in *The Great Revolutions and the Civilizations of Modernity* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2006), pp.vii-viii.

<sup>51</sup> Yu Ying-shih, “Zhouxin tupo he liyue chuantong,” in *Twenty-First Century*, No.58 (Apr, 2000), p.18.

modern dynamics, distinctive ways of interpretation of modernity, for which the original Western project constituted indeed the crucial starting point and continual – usually ambivalent – reference point.<sup>52</sup>

Critically, Eisenstadt's arguments that modernity is ideologically and structurally connected with the axial age civilizations, and that modernity must assume plural forms bore the most interesting fruit when Japan was drawn into comparison.

### 7.3.3 Japan's Non-Axial Transformation: A Sociological View

Japan by definition is not an axial age civilization: it has never experienced any form of drastic tension between the transcendental and mundane orders. According to Eisenstadt's formulation, such experience (or inexperience), enabled Japan to minimize ideologization of change and struggle because of a characteristic tendency towards rejection of absolutism. This in turn facilitated social mobilization and institutional transformation in Japan.<sup>53</sup>

To best illustrate how Japan achieved modernity as a non-axial country, especially in terms of being relatively free from ideological burdens, a discussion on China is necessary to examine how its experience of the axial age breakthrough and ensuing institutionalization restricted the unfolding of its history. In respect to the transcendental vision developed in China, Eisenstadt follows Schwartz's view that in the *Analects*, the immanent and transcendental worlds, and moral and natural forces are metaphysically connected through the mediation of the *Dao*.<sup>54</sup> Consequently, in Confucian China, where transcendental concerns were largely moralized and secularized, the tension

---

<sup>52</sup> S. N. Eisenstadt, *Comparative Civilizations and Multiple Modernities* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2003), p.504.

<sup>53</sup> S. N. Eisenstadt, *Japanese Civilization: A Comparative View*, p.420. Another great contemporary sociologist, Robert Bellah, holds a similar structural view of Japanese culture. Although Bellah does not use the term "axial" or "non-axial" as emphatically as did Eisenstadt, he refers frequently to Eisenstadt's comparative framework and arguments. See Robert Bellah, "Introduction," in *Imagining Japan* (Berkeley: U of California P, 2003), pp.1-62. The similarity between Eisenstadt's and Bellah's views is, perhaps, not surprising, as they were both greatly influenced by Max Weber and Weber's student, Talcott Parsons (1902-1979), and were clearly aware of how Jaspers' view of the axial age derived from Weber's works on comparative religion. This intellectual lineage is touched upon in both 7.1.3 and 7.4.1. of this dissertation. Bellah had authored and edited other works on the topic of axial age civilizations, which I will discuss in other projects.

<sup>54</sup> Benjamin Schwartz, "Transcendence in Ancient China," in *Daedalus*, Vol.104, No.2 (Spring, 1975), p.64; cited in S. N. Eisenstadt, "Introduction: The Axial Age Breakthrough in China and India," in *The Origin and Diversity of Axial Age Civilizations*, p.292.

between the transcendental and mundane was principally articulated in cultural terms. This particular mode of transcendence—an inward one—led to a uniquely this-worldly way of resolving the tension, that is, “through the cultivation of the social, political, and cultural orders as the major way of maintaining the cosmic harmony.”<sup>55</sup> Since such a world-view put heavy stress on order and harmony in any relationship, it required “proper conduct and attitude, which necessitates a very stringent and reflexive self-discipline.” This tendency, however, fostered no institutional breakthroughs in China after the empire was established in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE. Most importantly, the inseparability of cultural and political functions in such a system soon equated professional intellectuals with political functionaries. It also bound the Confucian literati-bureaucrats to the political center as a special social stratum with little autonomy. This structure in turn hindered the possibility of economic and cultural breakthroughs.<sup>56</sup> In the end, although China is a civilization capable of radical ideological breakthrough conducive to the momentum of modernization, its particular institutionalization of cultural dynamics posed a staggering obstacle to its development towards modernity.

From this viewpoint, the ideological conditioning of Japan towards modernity differed greatly from that of China. Lacking the tension characteristic of the axial age civilizations, the Japanese were accustomed to a primordial and undifferentiated world view and cosmology. There was no need for intellectual elites to bridge that gap by modeling the world order upon transcendental precepts. This phenomenon, in turn, minimized disputation among elites, thus producing rare differentiation between professionals, and between orthodoxies and heterodoxies. Accordingly, historical dynamics in Japan acquired an exceptional flexibility to change with minimal ideological obstruction. One brilliant example of this flexibility is Japan’s ability to transform the transcendental, universalistic orientations of Confucianism and Buddhism in an immanentist and particularistic direction.

In the face of foreign influences Japan always demonstrates “an openness to them combined with a tendency to Japanize them with but little effect on the basic Japanese ontological premises and conceptions of social order.”<sup>57</sup> The

---

<sup>55</sup> S. N. Eisenstadt, “Introduction: The Axial Age Breakthrough in China and India,” in *The Origin and Diversity of Axial Age Civilizations*, p.293.

<sup>56</sup> S. N. Eisenstadt, *Japanese Civilization: A Comparative View*, p.415.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p.425.

perennial practice of Japanization meant that “Japan always lived with these other civilizations but was never one of them. It continuously maintained its conscious collective uniqueness and the distinctiveness of its civilizational premises.” It was this intensive reflexivity that set Japan apart from other non-axial civilizations, bringing it closer to the axial ones.<sup>58</sup>

However, given the lack of dichotomy between the transcendental and mundane worlds, Japanese consciousness showed a high degree of continuity in many remarkable respects. Cosmologically, many sacred and natural elements were amalgamated without being absolutized.<sup>59</sup> Socially, as Japanese society was primarily defined in terms of primordial kinship, trust extended easily from family to broader settings; furthermore, since Japanese elites were not ideologically orientated, they raised no opposition to the extension of trust under the guise of universalistic principles.<sup>60</sup> Philosophically, it is argued that because there was no conception of discontinuities in cosmic time, none existed in mundane time as well. Therefore, the Japanese generally perceived no break between different regimes or historical stages. This very notion prompted Japanese to assume the mythical continuity of imperial symbolism, which is epitomized by reconstruction of the emperor system under the Meiji regime.<sup>61</sup>

Since modernity is a Western idea, Japan, like many other civilizations, felt an urgent need to search for a place in the new world dominated by the West.<sup>62</sup> Quite different from most Asian countries, Japan was never colonized. That is to say, Japan’s program of modernity was not affected through external force, but by the Meiji Restoration.

Although the translation of *Meiji Ishin* as “Meiji Restoration” has long been controversial, Eisenstadt argues that there are several factors preventing the event from being a true “revolution,” including a lack of tension between the transcendental and mundane orders, and the lack of ideological breakthroughs and overthrow of institutions. On the one hand, the reforms implemented by the Meiji government were designed to transform Japanese society to a degree equal to those brought about by Western modernity. On the other, it was a movement “proclaimed as a renovation of an older archaic system...and not as a revolution

---

<sup>58</sup> S. N. Eisenstadt, *The Great Revolutions and the Civilizations of Modernity*, pp.94-95.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, p.96.

<sup>60</sup> S. N. Eisenstadt, *Japanese Civilization: A Comparative View*, pp.425-426.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.423-424.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.428-429.

aiming to change the social and political order...according to principles that transcended them.”<sup>63</sup> That is to say, the Meiji government strategically prevented possible ideological confrontation by retaining or even reinventing old political symbols. Under this guise, whole institutions were actually reconstructed. Since the primary objective was to gain a solid footing on the global stage, the movement strove for maximum adaptability combined with a restorationist vision. Consequently, the *Meiji Ishin* brought about “an almost uniquely successful initial modernization based on neo-traditional orientation and symbols.”<sup>64</sup>

One of the most striking features of the Meiji Restoration is that it was effected by a small group of revolutionary, modernizing oligarchs, who were born to aristocratic samurai families.<sup>65</sup> In contrast to the flexibility of the Meiji oligarchs, Chinese intellectual and political elites were more structurally bound:

The identity between the cultural and political orders and the specific characteristics of the literati tended to maintain the dominance of a stagnant neo-traditionalism that continuously reinforced the non-transformative orientations of Chinese culture.<sup>66</sup>

In the case of Japan, a search for authenticity constituted the main focus of modernization. This search was, paradoxically, characterized by a swing between the negation of modernity as undermining the Japanese spirit and the appropriation of modernity to create an authentic Japanese version.<sup>67</sup> The extreme case of the latter developed into fascist nationalism with the slogan of “overcoming modernity.” Generally speaking, however, what made Japanese modernity distinct from that of others was its flexibility in defining traditionality and accommodating new ideas. Thus, “there did not develop a sharp confrontation between traditionality and modernity;” neither was there a rigid dividing line between “authentic” Japanese and Western modes.<sup>68</sup>

---

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p.430.

<sup>64</sup> S. N. Eisenstadt, “The Protestant Ethic Thesis in an Analytical and Comparative Framework,” in S. N. Eisenstadt ed., *The Protestant Ethic and Modernization: A Comparative View* (New York: Basic Books Inc., 1968), p.9.

<sup>65</sup> S. N. Eisenstadt, *Modernization: Protest and Change* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1966), pp.76-77.

<sup>66</sup> S. N. Eisenstadt, *Tradition, Change, and Modernity*, p.274.

<sup>67</sup> S. N. Eisenstadt, *Japanese Civilization: A Comparative View*, p.432.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p.433.

Tradition and traditionalism constituted a sort of general orientation, often identified with what was authentically Japanese, in the name of which many activities and organizations, old and new, were brought together and legitimized.<sup>69</sup>

It is such flexibility, adaptability, and a non-confrontational attitude that distinguished Japanese modernity not only from the Western paradigm, but also from the resistant mode of other axial or non-axial civilizations. Perhaps Japan serves as the best example of Eisenstadt's theory of "multiple modernities" in view of its self-conscious incorporation of tradition into modernity. Again we find a contrasting situation with China in its confrontation with Western culture: Chinese tended to hold the extreme attitudes of either totally rejecting their traditions or totally negating Western values. According to Eisenstadt's argument, this predicament also involved the ideological tension and conflict characteristic of most axial age civilizations, which developed into a deadlock in China because of its particular historical context and social conditions.

## **7.4 East Asia in a Comparative Frame**

### **7.4.1 Critical Evaluation of the Axial Age Theory**

As the title suggests, in this concluding section I attempt to propose a tenable method for constructing a cultural image of East Asia. Towards this end, an examination of the theoretical tool with which this construction began is in order. The following evaluation of the axial age theory will demonstrate first its limitations, both ideological and structural, and then its advantages, which are conducive to the idea of a cultural sphere such as East Asia. An analysis of the pedigree of the theory should make the argument more convincing.

According to Jaspers, his recognition and coinage of the "axes" in world history were inspired in contradistinction to Hegel's (1770-1831) claim that Jesus Christ stands as the only axis, to and from whom all history unfolds. In Jaspers' view, a real axis of world history must be situated at a point that is most fruitful in shaping humanity. This axis, if not immediately evident, must be empirically verifiable "to give rise to a common frame of historical

---

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, p.424.

self-comprehension for all peoples.”<sup>70</sup>

The publication year of Jaspers’ book, 1949, indicates that his views on civilization were formulated during, between, or even before the great wars. This was a historic period that witnessed the collapse of the Western social order and found expression in some renowned precedents for Jaspers’ philosophy of history, such as Oswald Spengler’s (1880-1936) *The Decline of the West* and Arnold Toynbee’s (1889-1975) *A Study of History*. However, when it comes to its intellectual lineage, researchers have pointed out that the very idea of axial age was produced along a vein deriving from Max Weber, who in comparing great religions of the world had already noted independent but almost simultaneous cultural breakthroughs.

Ideologically speaking, Weber’s juxtaposition of civilizations served to explain the uniqueness of Western European civilization, which underwent its most radical rationalization in the modern era. This rationalization came to fruition in capitalism. Although Jaspers revamped Weber’s sociological concern into a philosophical query, both of their positions were inevitably West-centric despite their relativizing of Western civilization. Their comparative approach uses Western modernization as a yardstick against which the accomplishments of other civilizations are measured. Therefore, Jaspers’ paralleling of major traditions constituted wartime introspection on the one hand, but this approach also unwittingly deprived those civilizations of their verve on the other.

Structurally speaking, two different narratives—historically specific and theoretically general—are usually adopted in discourses on the axial age. The reason for focusing on Benjamin Schwartz’s and Yu Ying-shih’s views in expounding the Chinese axial age is that they refer to different sources to assert a historic breakthrough.<sup>71</sup> For a civilization worth the title of an axis, this phenomenal change must be empirically verifiable as Jaspers insisted. Therefore, claims shall be made from the particularistic to the universalistic to prevent oversimplification. However, when modernity becomes a target for

---

<sup>70</sup> Karl Jaspers, *The Origin and Goal of History*, p.1.

<sup>71</sup> Yu Ying-shih’s historical perspective is all the more conspicuous in regards to the axial age breakthrough as the primary, but only one of the four, major transformation in Chinese intellectual history. This method, as he asserts, takes the development of Chinese thought as an organic continuum with twists and turns. In this view, the influence of Western knowledge since the 16<sup>th</sup> century does not form a major “breakthrough” but constitutes a separate issue. Although this treatment still suggests a dichotomy between tradition and modernity, it is generally free from Western ideology inherent in the current axial age theory. Yu Ying-shih, *Renwen yu minzhu*, pp.145-147.



narration, a streamlined version of history becomes imperative to facilitate a comparative study. Remarkably, the characterization of Japanese civilization showcases a combination of both types of unevenness—ideological and structural—inherent in the axial age theory.

Eisenstadt's study of Japanese civilization claims that Japan occupies a unique position in world history as being the only non-axial civilization to maintain its own cultural distinctiveness without being overwhelmed or marginalized by any dominant axial civilization, such as China in the pre-modern, and the West in the modern era. As a result, Japan is also the only civilization that achieved successful modernization without totally following the Western European model, a model deeply rooted in a particular version of transcendental breakthrough that finds no counterpart in any other axial civilization. However, this macro-historical analysis assumes too strong a deterministic relationship between tradition and modernity. It also seems too theory-oriented. In the case of Japan, the lack of axial age breakthrough becomes a determinant in its historical development; any other culture drawn into this model also acquires its primary identity in terms of being axial. This reasoning, proceeding from the universalistic to the particularistic, is what could potentially harm the historical particularity of a culture or society. Indeed, one of the reviewers of Eisenstadt's *Japanese Civilization: A Comparative View* points out that "what claims to be a book on 'Japanese Civilization' only deals with a very small part of 'Japan,' mainly at the middling, institutional, level." In the author's view, any discussion on Japanese culture that doesn't mention its geography, ecology, rice agriculture, tea ceremony, aesthetics, craftsmanship, and so forth, is indeed incomplete.<sup>72</sup>

One point deserves particular attention. As the major part of Jaspers' book discusses the present and future world as being dominated by Western civilization, he wrote little on Chinese civilization. Most characterizations of the Chinese axial age are made by later scholars from various backgrounds. However, a common ground for most of those descriptions is, as shown in 3.3, an exceedingly stable structure fostered by an institutionalized Confucianism and its incompatibility with modernization.<sup>73</sup> There is nothing that resembles the

---

<sup>72</sup> Alan Macfarlane, "Review of S. N. Eisenstadt, *Japanese Civilization: A Comparative View*," in *Cambridge Anthropology* (1999). Pages not specified. For an electronic version, see: <http://www.alanmacfarlane.com/TEXTS/EISENSTA.pdf>

<sup>73</sup> Although Jin Guantao 金觀濤 delves from different perspective into this stable structure,

Western epic from the classical breakthrough to radical rationalization in the modern era. It can be reasonably questioned whether this characterization is essentially any different from Hegel's observation that Asia (particularly China and India) is stuck in the historical mire. Judging from the above analysis, it is the Western standard assumed here that largely accounts for the relatively low degree of articulation of China as one of the "axes." In contrast, although Japan is a "non-axial" civilization, its successful modernization warranted it a special place in one of the branches of the axial age theory. In retrospect, the axial age discourse is by no means theoretically neutral.

Moreover, Eisenstadt based his understanding of the breakthrough largely on Western experiences, whose definitions of "tension," "transcendental," and "mundane" are grounded in a historical context specific to Western societies. Eisenstadt was not unaware of this problem, and in his last years he proposed the idea of "multiple axialities" (corresponding to "multiple modernities"), which seeks to demystify a seemingly uniform world-wide axial age movement and to better illustrate how different axial age components interacted among themselves and with non-axial civilizations in the shaping of world histories.<sup>74</sup> However, the model is useful only when its deterministic perspective is enlarged to encompass more historical, geographical, and cultural concerns.

#### 7.4.2 East Asia around the Chinese Axis?

Despite the criticism of over-manipulation of the interpretive framework, another respect of the axial age theory, namely, its general observations on world history, are enlightening. What is more, if properly managed, the spatial-temporal structure inherent in such observations can serve to remedy the biased image of East Asia prevalent in much of the contemporary discourse.

Jaspers credited the axial age with prime historical significance because the sense of history of human beings emerged at this time. Since then the world has divided into either pre-axial/primitive or axial/historical domains, and

---

and claims that it was the unique breakthrough of China—which constitutes the only counterpart to the Western, salvational style of breakthrough—that gave rise to this structure, its incompatibility with the Western mode of modernization is still apparent. The pattern he draws from the Chinese experience provides a totally non-Western lesson and indication for the 21<sup>st</sup>-century world. See his "Zhanwang disange qiannian" 展望第三個千年 (A Prospect of the Third Millennium), in *Twenty-First Century*, No.57 (Feb, 2000), pp.20-29.

<sup>74</sup> S. N. Eisenstadt, "Axial Civilizations and the Axial Age Reconsidered," in Arnason, Johann P. et al. eds., *Axial Civilizations and World History* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2004), p.531.

Japan is a renowned “convert” in the Sinocentric world.<sup>75</sup> In the same spirit, Eisenstadt also argues that world history can be understood in terms of continuous interaction between the axial and non-axial civilizations:

It is the expansion of these civilizations and their encounters with one another and with the great non-Axial civilizations—with, for instance, the Mongols—that have occupied the center stage of history as it was depicted by the historians of these civilizations. These histories depicted the ways in which the Axial civilizations succeeded in creating institutional frameworks which dominated over those of the non-Axial ones. These histories also pushed many of the non-Axial civilizations into the margins of history—as people without history or, to be more accurate, people with, from the point of view of the historiographies of the Axial civilizations, only local histories.<sup>76</sup>

Both Jaspers’ and Eisenstadt’s statements suggest that the axial age is paradigmatic in two ways. Temporally, there is an “age” that concludes all past events and prefaces future ones; spatially, there are “axes” around which cultures constellate and tend to show more or less similar historical characteristics. Cultures not drawn into these orbits remain unhistorical or gradually fall into extinction. Conceptually speaking, the axial age is a proposition full of comparative spirit: each of the axes assumes particularity in juxtaposition to each other, yet they are worth comparing because of a common historic turn. This observation, despite its ideological trait, encourages us to argue an East Asia that, more than being geographically bound, evinces cultural and historical symbioses whose basic structures were shaped by some phenomenal spiritual breakthroughs.

It has been shown that East Asia is by no means a self-evident idea but one manipulated in the face of Western imperialism, especially at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. However, as argued earlier, much of the discourse on East Asia presumes a dichotomy: a traditional East Asia *versus* a modern West. Here both East Asia and the West are spatial concepts of strong temporal connotations. Lying between the two spheres, Japan is

---

<sup>75</sup> Karl Jaspers, *The Origin and Goal of History*, pp.6-8.

<sup>76</sup> S. N. Eisenstadt, *Japanese Civilization: A Comparative View*, p.414.

regarded both Eastern and Western (perhaps neither Eastern nor Western), and both the uniqueness of its traditions and the achievement of its modernization draw considerable attention.

In my judgment, such a dichotomous view does justice to neither East Asia nor the West. Both have great traditions. Regarding the momentum of modernization, if there is one historically and culturally coherent East Asia to be claimed, it requires some “potential rules” in the reactions of each of its members to the challenge of modernity. In this sense, the problem of modernization of China constitutes a perennial challenge to the norm of Western modernity. What is more, the distinctness of Japanese experience adds to the diversity of a rich, complex, and structurally organic East Asia rather than constitutes an outlier.

While Western Europe seems to be a well-demarcated cultural community whose civilization is considered to be the combination of two axes, Greek and Judaic, what really matters is not the figurative idea of “axis” but distinguishable cultural fountainheads. In this sense, for the notion of East Asia to be culturally legitimate, more studies must be devoted to finding a cultural dynamic manifest throughout its history, and to discovering great traditions that have shaped this history of East Asia in a decisive but not predestined manner; Chinese and Indian cultures with many of their variations are strong candidates. Last but not least, the idea of “axis” presumes “periphery.” In the case of China, Japan acted as both a usurper and a challenger of the axial paradigm, thereby filling the Sinocentric world with intellectual tension. Historically speaking, it was also the modern ambition of imperial Japan that raised East Asia to unprecedented heights. As the view of “all under heaven” continued to pervade traditional China, it was Japan’s sense of self-identity that most benefited our understanding of this geo-cultural region. Significantly, regardless of its ideological history, “region” in this sense is more historically coherent than geographically contingent and is expected to be a useful factor for categorizing world history. Not denying the axial status of China, its relationship with Japan deserves more study to question the given preconceptions of modernity and East Asia.

## 8. Arguing the East in the Modern World

### 8.1 World History as a Modern Western Genre

As the title suggests, this concluding chapter deals with two ideas, that is, the East and the modern world, and how the former acquired its identity in the latter. By the qualifier “modern,” what is assumed here is a theoretical stance that considers both the East and the world as more than cartographical designations; temporality is also addressed. Indeed, the most heated issue in the so-called East-West debate is how the West, which occupies a mere corner of Eurasia, has become so technologically and institutionally advanced that other parts of the world have come under its dominance in recent centuries. A derivative inquiry is, in the process of the West overwhelming the world, how the East, represented by the immense landmass of Eurasia beyond the western tip, came to be a perennial inferior antithesis to the West.<sup>1</sup> While the two questions cannot possibly be answered here—arguably no historical accounts are sufficiently detailed and omniscient to give definite answers as the questions are nothing less than history itself—this chapter delves into some systematic interpretations of the East-West dichotomy, which, despite each constituting a grand narrative that claims grasp of the essence of the division, reflect how the dichotomy has been understood differently according to diverse historical experiences and geographical conditions.

This treatment of the East-West division, friction, as well as interaction, is subsumed under the genre of “world history” here. In *What is Global History?*, a perceptive booklet introducing this discipline, Pamela Kyle Crossley makes the following statement:

---

<sup>1</sup> K. M. Panikkar grasped the history in terms of Europe’s assuming sea powers and expanding its commercial economy to the non-European world. The imposition of European political authority over Asia derived from the preceding two factors. See “Introduction,” in *Asia and Western Dominance: A Survey of the Vasco Da Gama Epoch of Asian History, 1498-1945* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1959), pp.13-17. Edward Said characterized Europe’s ideological domination over Asia as having proceeded in the academic guise of Orientalism, which is a long Western tradition but culminated in the modern era. Critically, while Said recognized the Islamic world as the centralpiece of European Orientalism, Panikkar claimed his work to be the first “study of the relations of Europe with non-Islamic Asia [—particularly India, China, and Japan—] as a whole” (p.17). The different emphases, however, complement each other in narrating the story of subjugation of the East to the West. See Chapter 1 for more in-depth introduction to Said’s argument.

[M]any great religious traditions and most cultures preserve an original story about the beginnings of the universe or the creation of mankind...This tendency to be inclusive for purposes of understanding the deep factors behind change and development is, perhaps, universal. Though it does not in method resemble much of what global or world historians do today, it accounts in part for the continuing fascination with the ideal of a universal history.<sup>2</sup>

The tendency to make overarching narratives might be universal, yet Crossley is also aware that what is practiced by “global or world historians” currently constitutes a rather specialized field. As will be demonstrated, the apparent East-West difference has bewildered—and also stimulated—historians and thinkers to formulate grand narratives on how human history evolves or simply moves itself. A further claim can be made that “world history” is a modern Western genre; all similar narratives that are of Eastern origins are inspired by the West. Before analyzing some representative works of this genre, both Western and Eastern, a brief review of its formulation will help establish the fundamental arguments. For convenience’s sake, a rough distinction between world history of a narrative kind and that of a theoretical kind is employed.

In terms of narrative, H. G. Wells is widely regarded as the author who made world history a popular genre. “*The Outline of History* was first written in 1918-1919,” as Wells recollects in a 1931 introduction written for a revised edition: “There were many reasons to move a writer to attempt a World History in 1918. It was the last, the weariest, most disillusioned year of the Great War....Everyone was ‘thinking internationally,’ or at least trying to do so. But there was a widespread realization that everywhere the essentials of the huge problems that had been thrust so suddenly and tragically upon the democracies

---

<sup>2</sup> Pamela Kyle Crossley, *What is Global History?* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008), p.5. Crossley distinguishes “world history” from “global history” as viewed by historians: “Scholars of global-level history have struggled to follow the outlines of ‘world’ and ‘global’ genres. Outstanding among this group has been Bruce Mazlish, who as early as 1993 associated inclusive but perhaps haphazard historical compendia as ‘world’ histories, while those focusing on large but coherent patterns appeared to him to be ‘global.’” (p.107). Such a distinction, however, matters little in this chapter that deals with conceptual categories.

of the world were insufficiently understood.”<sup>3</sup> It was the devastation of WWI that motivated Wells to embark on the enterprise of world history; the deeper he delved into the causes of events, the more he felt obliged to turn his eyes away from “a general review of European unity,” for that “was only the latter act of a much greater drama.”<sup>4</sup> This statement gives us a clear idea that the “world” for Wells was essentially, and inevitably, the background of and preparation for modern Western experiences.

Among many subsequent world historians, William H. McNeill, whose *A World History* was first published in 1967, is worth particular attention. In the preface to the 1979 edition, McNeill describes the rationale for writing on world history:

Civilizations are usually massive societies, weaving the lives of millions of persons into a loose yet coherent life style across hundreds or even thousands of miles and for periods of time that are very long when measured by the span of an individual human life. Being both massive and long-lived, civilizations must perforce also be few...These facts allow an overview of the history of mankind as a whole.<sup>5</sup>

McNeill goes on to explain the organizing idea of his book, which, simply put, is an impact-reaction model:

[I]n any given age the world balance among cultures was liable to disturbance emanating from one or more centers where men succeeded in creating an unusually attractive or powerful civilization...In successive ages the major centers of such disturbance to the world altered. It therefore becomes possible to survey the epochs of world history by studying first the center or centers of primary disturbance, and then considering how the other peoples of the earth reacted to or against what they know or experienced (often at second or third hand) of the innovations that had occurred in the main centers of cultural

---

<sup>3</sup> H. G. Wells, *The New and Revised Outline of History: Being a Plain History of Life and Mankind* (Garden City: Garden City Publishing Company, 1931), pp.1-2.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p.3.

<sup>5</sup> William H. McNeill, *A World History* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1979), p.v.

creativity.<sup>6</sup>

This lucid account also recapitulates the guiding spirit of McNeill's 1963 *magnum opus*, *The Rise of the West*. Interestingly, in a 1989 review article, "*The Rise of the West* after Twenty-five Years," he turns critical of his previous view, reflecting on the fact that during the decade that he wrote the book, from 1954 to 1963, the United States rose to the apex of its global influence: "It follows that my vision of the world's past can be dismissed as being no more than a rationalization of American hegemony, retrojecting the situation of post-World War II decades upon the whole of the world's past by claiming that analogous patterns of cultural dominance and diffusion had existed always."<sup>7</sup>

Wells and McNeill are quoted as two examples to indicate how world historical narratives have been closely connected with Western consciousness. From the decline of European power in the late 1910s to America's rise to an unprecedented height in the early 1960s, it can be said that the tendency to "look at the non-Western world" was eventually spun into another West-centric narrative structure. Furthermore, McNeill's systematic view of world history brings us closer to a more theoretical kind of this genre, which is generally equivalent to the category of philosophy of history and provides more sophisticated, though sometimes quite artificial, treatment of the East-West dichotomy in widely diverse theoretical frameworks.<sup>8</sup>

In Chapter 7 Karl Jaspers' proposition of the axial age civilizations has been discussed in detail. This theory is significant for at least two reasons. Firstly, the model has been continuously elaborated upon and revised since its

---

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p.6.

<sup>7</sup> William H. McNeill, "*The Rise of the West* after Twenty-five Years," in *The Rise of the West: A History of The Human Community* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1991), p.xvi.

<sup>8</sup> In an article that introduces Marshall G. S. Hodgson's Islamist view of world historical studies, Edmund Burke III begins his discussion by summarizing major Western trends of writing world history. The one that was most in vogue in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century was the Marxist economic view, represented by such prominent figures as Immanuel Wallerstein and Eric Hobsbawm. However, as Burke points out, William McNeill might have done more than any other individuals in reshaping the genre of world history. "*The Rise of the West* has provided students with a comprehensive account of the history of the world within the tradition of civilizational studies. McNeill's innovation was to unhook the study of civilizations from the Procrustean bed of metaphysics—whether it be the pessimism of Spengler or the cyclicalism of Toynbee." However, Burke continues, "Borrowing the concept of cultural diffusion from anthropology, McNeill's world history is one in which what goes round comes round—but where inexplicably the West is the principal beneficiary." See Edmund Burke III's "Introduction: Marshall G. S. Hodgson and World History," in Marshall G. S. Hodgson, *Rethinking World History: Essays on Europe, Islam, and World History* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993), p.ix-x.



emergence in 1949; secondly, the year of publication of Jaspers' *The Origin and Goal of History* indicates that his world history paradigm was conceived primarily during the inter-war period, when the slogan of "decline of the West" was in vogue. Indeed, in the introduction to the book, Jaspers, as a relative newcomer to this genre, reviews theories of world history proposed by his Western predecessors. While Hegel held that all human events lead "finally to the concept of a single meaningful pattern, in which all diversities have their appointed place," for Leopold von Ranke (1795-1886), "[w]orld history was the history of the West." Hans Ferdinand Helmolt (1865-1929) took a more egalitarian view towards all races and cultures, whereas both Oswald Spengler and Arnold Toynbee approached the epic of world history through analogies of organic cycles.<sup>9</sup> From Hegel's and Ranke's optimism about the West's being the summit of human history to Spengler's and Toynbee's formulations of the West's decline, nearly all world historical narratives follow the undulation of the hegemony of Western Europe. Jaspers was no exception. He viewed the history of humankind as being shaped by five main actors—Greece, Israel, Persia, India, and China—that experienced spiritual breakthroughs from 800 to 200 BCE independently. All peripheral societies and cultures were merged into these civilizations or otherwise threatened with extinction. However, a major portion of this book is dedicated to explaining the unique experience of Western modernization. As history reveals, Jaspers argued, modernization took place automatically only in a West that combines the essences of both Greek and Judaic cultures; Persian civilization does not exist, and China and India still live solely on spiritual resources passed down from the past. In spite of the strong philosophical bias, Jaspers' formulation is similar to McNeill's visions of both Western and world histories, which might imply a common perspective or even mindset. As indicated, McNeill's books further reflect the change in the center of Western hegemony from Europe to America.

So far I have tried to demonstrate how the genre of world history, whether of a narrative kind or of a theoretical one, is inevitably West-centric in the sense that all relevant works are motivated by the historical experiences of the (modern) West. Nevertheless, whether geographically, linguistically, or ideologically, the West must assume an East that helps establish its own identity, and the East is forced to either argue its unique identity without being

---

<sup>9</sup> Karl Jaspers, *The Origin and Goal of History*, p.xiv.

relegated to a lesser developed phase of human civilization, or rid itself of traditional burdens to embrace whatever has made the West advanced. Of course, most “Eastern projects” lie between the two extremes, and it is the purpose of this final chapter—after going through so many specific cases in the previous chapters—to examine how the East defined itself and was defined by the West. Again, the main focus here is on the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, a time when Western imperialism rose to its zenith and Eastern countries sought to fight back in intensively intellectual and ideological terms.

## 8.2 The East as Characterized by Westerners

According to Jaspers, the breakthroughs occurring during the axial age changed peoples’ consciousness of life. The changes were so radical that they not only brought to an end the thought of the previous thousands of years, but also determined the modes of thinking of later ages. This is evidenced by the esteem assigned to such axial figures as Socrates, Old Testament prophets, Zoroaster, the Buddha, Confucius, and Laozi. It is the great convergence of various kinds of thought that made a uniform structure of world history possible:

*Until today* mankind has lived by what happened during the Axial Period, by what was thought and created during that period. In each new upward flight it returns in recollection to this period and is fired anew by it. Ever since then it has been the case that recollections and reawakenings of the potentialities of the Axial Period—renaissances—afford a spiritual impetus. Return to this beginning is the ever-recurrent even in China, India, and the West.<sup>10</sup>

The synchronicity of spiritual breakthroughs and their longstanding influences are a great mystery of history that Jaspers did not intend to solve but to reveal. Jaspers narrowed the five axial age civilizations to three areas: China, India, and the West. His argument crystallized into an East-West dichotomy, after which he turned to the theme of the West’s modernization. Critically, Jaspers did not approve of the thesis of immobility of Chinese and Indian societies prevalent in Europe from the 18<sup>th</sup> century; he observed the

---

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p.7. The italics are Jaspers’.

great dynamism of Chinese and Indian histories in their accomplishment of the axial age breakthroughs and their ensuing remarkable cultural developments. But Jaspers was also forced to concede a seemingly indisputable historical phenomenon: “In comparison with China and India, there seem to be far more dramatic fresh starts in the West...The dissimilarity to Europe is not a radical one. The great analogy remains: the creative epoch of the Axial Period followed by revolutions and renaissances; until A.D. 1500, when Europe takes its unprecedented step, whereas China and India, at precisely the same moment, enter into cultural decline.”<sup>11</sup>

The details of Jaspers’ explication of the uniqueness of Western civilization go beyond the scope of this chapter; here suffice it to place his view into the genealogy of Western discourse on world history. As put by Jaspers, Hegel “brought together China, India, and the West as stages in the dialectical sequence of the development of the spirit.”<sup>12</sup> Glancing through Hegel’s introduction to his lengthy lectures of philosophy of world history, the following formula might be closest to Jaspers’ paraphrase:

For if we cast our eyes around the world, we can discern three main principles in the older continents: the Far Eastern (i.e. Mongolian, Chinese, or Indian) principle, which is also the first to appear in history; the Mohammedan world, in which the principle of the abstract spirit, of monotheism, is already present, although it is coupled with unrestrained arbitrariness; and the Christian, Western European world, in which the highest principle of all, the spirit’s recognition of itself and its own profundity, is realised.<sup>13</sup>

Hegel’s definition of “history” follows his own complicated view of the “spirit.” Although Jaspers’ approach is quite different from Hegel’s metaphysical speculation, he inherited the latter’s classification of world historical stages into the Far East and the West; the Islamic world is rarely touched upon for it is not an axial age civilization by definition. In any case, despite trivial differences, China and India often appear together in both Hegel’s and Jaspers’ works. In

---

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.54-55.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p.10.

<sup>13</sup> Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, H. B. Nisbet tr., *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History – Introduction: Reason in History* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1975), pp.128-129.

Hegel's case, they are regarded as unmistakable symbols for how civilizations can achieve high levels of development without progressing to consummation: "there are nations in which many arts have attained a high degree of perfection, as in China and India. But although the Chinese invented gunpowder, they did not know how to use it, while the Indians produced superb gems of poetry without any corresponding advances in art, freedom, and law."<sup>14</sup> Jaspers seems to have been more sympathetic to the non-Western world, but the difference between East and West is so profound that it led to the latter's dominance over the former:

The differentiation into a multiplicity of languages and peoples is perhaps no less in India and China. But there this differentiation does not become, in the course of struggle, the foundation for a three-dimensional contrast between the various forms taken by social and cultural reality [:] it does not become the historical structure of a world in which the particular configurations develop an energy and consistency that threaten to burst asunder the whole mass.<sup>15</sup>

Together with previous quotes, we can see that, for Jaspers, the West distinguishes itself from the East because of a totally different type of struggle and fusion that make up its history. The historical momentum of the West surfaced as structural superiority after 1500.

A closer precedent to Jaspers' formulation of world history is Max Weber. While his sociological concerns have little in common with Hegel's and Jaspers' philosophical interests, in terms of a comparative framework that addresses the essence of independent spiritual breakthroughs and the institutionalization of world views derived therefrom, Weber's works no doubt herald the method that Jaspers was to adopt later.<sup>16</sup> That much of Weber's research was comparative is widely acknowledged; in *The Religion of China*, "Weber continued from his theme in the *Protestant Ethic* by trying to contrast the distinguishing features of traditional Chinese society, Confucianism and Taoism, with...the spirit of capitalism...Weber thus located the decisive differentiating element in the

---

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p.102.

<sup>15</sup> Karl Jaspers, *The Origin and Goal of History*, pp.57-58.

<sup>16</sup> See Talcott Parsons, "Introduction," in Max Weber, Ephraim Fischhoff tr., *The Sociology of Religion* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1991), pp.xxix-lxxvii.

passive and traditionalist character in Confucian and Taoist values, explaining why capitalism developed in the West but not in China.”<sup>17</sup> In another work full of comparative spirit, *The Religion of India*, Weber makes a vivid analogy between Asia and Europe in the concluding chapter:

For Asia as a whole China played somewhat the role of France in the modern Occident. All cosmopolitan “polish” stems from China, to Tibet to Japan and outlying Indian territories. Against this India has a significance comparable to that of antique Hellenism. There are few conceptions transcending practical interests in Asia whose source would not finally have to be sought there.<sup>18</sup>

What is crucial here is that in Weber’s account, both India and China are invariably measured against a European yardstick and, in spite of the perceived cultural heterogeneity, the two countries can be lumped together and marked as “Asia,” whose reference is always a Europe that self-triggered a process of religious secularization and social rationalization that led to the emergence of capitalism in the modern era.

The summary made above is admittedly simplistic in that it omits the quintessence of Hegel’s, Jaspers’, and Weber’s arguments, while other significant authors are not treated. Nevertheless, by tracing the outline of representative discourses, it is clear that the East-West dichotomy was often addressed in terms of the tradition-modernity difference. The following sections will examine how this view of duality was digested and revamped spatially and temporarily in some of the countries of the East.

### **8.3 The East as Characterized by Easterners: Japan**

It might appear disproportionate to assign an entire section to Japan, given its relatively small geographical size and historical influence. However, it is in Japan that such issues as Asia, modernity, and world history have received the

---

<sup>17</sup> C. K. Yang, “Introduction,” in Max Weber, Hans H. Gerth tr., *The Religion of China: Confucianism and Taoism* (New York: The Free Press, 1968), pp.xviii-xix.

<sup>18</sup> Max Weber, Hans H. Gerth and Don Martindale trs., *The Religion of India: The Sociology of Hinduism and Buddhism* (New York: The Free Press, 1967), p.329.

most elaboration outside Western academia.<sup>19</sup> By comparing the views of world history held by the West and Japan respectively, the knowledge-power structure of the genre becomes conspicuous.

In July, 1942, that is, in the thick of the Asia-Pacific War, Kōyama Iwao 高山岩男 (1905-1993) wrote in the preface to *The Philosophy of World History*:

The previous European War [i.e. WWI], despite its scale of a world war, was in nature a war restricted to the modern era...The world order that the Paris Peace Conference secured represented nothing more than the principles of the modern world; it was a mere continuation of such principles. After twenty years of false peace, another European War broke out, which was symptomatic of the modern principles. Hence, the current war [i.e. the Asia-Pacific War] is a farewell to the modern era. Judging from the Greater East Asia War that the Japanese empire started, the fact is crystally clear.<sup>20</sup>

For the contemporary reader, the logic of this statement does not seem to be coherent. Nevertheless, many keywords that activated modern Japanese academia are included therein. The purpose of this section is to illuminate the meaning of the claim by restoring it back to the historical context.

The leading figure in Japan's embarkation on massive absorption of Western civilization was Fukuzawa Yukichi 福澤諭吉 (1835-1901), who is widely considered as the greatest enlightenment scholar in modern Japan. In *An Outline of Civilizational Discourse* published in 1875, he portrayed a hierarchy of civilization in which Western European countries and the United States occupied the top tier. According to Fukuzawa, for a country to be civilized, the whole nation must be institutionalized first, within which the creativity of its people is allowed full development without obstruction. By this criterion, old empires such as China, Japan, and Turkey were merely semi-civilized as their peoples were largely bound by custom, and Africa and Australia were not civilized at all. For Japan to become a civilized country, Fukuzawa claimed, it

---

<sup>19</sup> In Western discourse as well, and especially in the axial age theory, Japan is presented as an enigmatic case for scholars to revise their frameworks to better account for the East-West dichotomy, which is challenged by Japan's extraordinarily successful modernization. This issue is discussed in Chapter 7.

<sup>20</sup> Kōyama Iwao, *Sekaishi no tetsugaku* 世界史の哲学 (The Philosophy of World History) (Tokyo: Kobunshi Shobō, 2001), p.8.

was necessary to follow the path created by Western countries rather than to adhere to Eastern traditions.<sup>21</sup> While in his early middle age Fukuzawa still attempted to unite Chinese and Korean revolutionists to form a front against Western powers, in an 1885 editorial—published anonymously but generally believed to be Fukuzawa’s work—he urged the Japanese to say goodbye to Asia and thus concluded with this message: “If one keeps company with bad friends, one cannot be exempt from a bad reputation. So we have to reject our bad friends in Asia and the East from the bottom of our hearts.”<sup>22</sup>

To leave out details here, the path that Japan took from the mid-nineteenth century generally followed Fukuzawa’s outline. Fukuzawa died in 1901. At this time, nonetheless, the very idea of Asia underwent transformations in Japan. As mentioned in the previous chapters, Okakura Tenshin published *The Ideal of the East* in 1903 and popularized the slogan of “Asia is one.” He argued that Asian civilization is based on the principle of beauty, from which derived all the major religions of the world; such a spiritual civilization is far superior to material, European civilization. In the book, although Okakura traces the change and development in Chinese and Indian arts in the course of history, he directs the flow of the narrative to their perfect fusion and sublimation in Japan: “The history of Japanese art becomes thus the history of Asiatic ideals—the beach where each successive wave of Eastern thought has left its sand-ripple as it beat against the national consciousness.”<sup>23</sup>

Compared with Fukuzawa Yukichi, it is obvious that Okakura Tenshin had a greater expectation of Asia, which means the civilizational view of the Japanese changed with the development of their country. But the common ground between them is even more noticeable: while Fukuzawa emphasizes the idea of *kokutai* 国体 (that is, national polity, which Fukuzawa interpreted as the English term “nationality”) in *An Outline of Civilizational Discourse*, Okakura’s interest in “national consciousness” proved no less intense.

The drastic change in Japan’s civilizational view was social psychologically grounded:

---

<sup>21</sup> Fukuzawa Yukichi, *Bunmeiron no gairiyaku* 文明論之概略 (An Outline of Civilizational Discourse), in *Fukuzawa Yukichi senshū* 福澤諭吉選集 (Selected Works of Fukuzawa Yukichi) (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1981), Vol.4, p.20.

<sup>22</sup> Fukuzawa Yukichi, “Datsu-A ron” 脱亜論 (On Leaving Asia), in *Fukuzawa Yukichi senshū*, Vol.7, p.224.

<sup>23</sup> Okakura Kakuzō, *The Ideals of the East*, in *Okakura Kakuzō: Collected English Writings*, Vol.1, p.16.

[T]he Japanese adopted the struggle to overcome their inferiority in the hope of sustaining the political and cultural autonomy of their nation. Once the Japanese were convinced that modernization did not lead to this goal, their images of themselves and their past went through a revision; their past became not something to be overcome but rather a source of inspiration. This romantic yearning for a “lost” cultural tradition became manifest in the discursive trend of “returning to Asia.”<sup>24</sup>

This phenomenon is generally called “reviving Asia” (興亜), which is an antithesis to Fukuzawa’s earlier proposal of “leaving Asia” (脱亜). Despite their seeming difference, both projects were rooted in the same historical trend, as one of the definitions of “Asianism” (アジア主義) clarifies: “It had been continuously reformulated in modern Japan, regarding ‘Asia’ as a unity in contradistinction to ‘the West,’ or it was Japan’s worldview by which the country tried to define its own place in Asia. Particularly, in the face of Western impact, Japan moved more quickly than other Asian countries toward Westernization/modernization; two different self-identities—that of ‘leaving Asia’ and of ‘reviving Asia’—emerged. Asianism is the aggregate title of the ideas and movements of ‘reviving Asia’.”<sup>25</sup> Critically, neither “reviving Asia” nor “leaving Asia” could have taken root without the premise of “modernization” or “Westernization,” aligning itself with the East or West became for Japan more a geopolitical decision than an issue of national survival, which is different from the case of China and, to a certain degree, India.

As history proceeded, successive victories in the Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895), the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905), and the First World War gradually established Japan as an international power. The devastation of Europe after the Great War was an effective antidote to Japan’s fascination with Westernization, and the power vacuum in inter-war East Asia facilitated Japan’s regional and even global deployment. It was precisely at this time that

---

<sup>24</sup> Yumiko Iida, “Fleeing the West, Making Asia Home: Transpositions of Otherness in Japanese Pan-Asianism, 1905-1930,” in *Alternatives*, No.22 (1997), p.409.

<sup>25</sup> Koyasu Nobukuni ed., *Nihon shisōshi jiten* 日本思想史辞典 (Dictionary of Japanese Intellectual History) (Tokyo: Perikansha, 2009), p.7. This entry is written by Nakamura Shunsaku 中村春作.



the genre of civilizational discourse resurged in Japanese academia, but it began to show a strong Japan-centric Asianism: “[the very idea that] Japan is the product of harmonious fusion of Eastern and Western civilizations and is thus obliged to establish a new civilizational paradigm in Asia is nothing less than ‘Asianism,’ which has already found its roots in East-West civilizational discourse.”<sup>26</sup> Such an East-West civilizational discourse was, from the very beginning, too vague to indicate anything other than Japan’s self-image or imagination: “it proposed deliberately different views from those derived from Western experiences on the one hand, and manifested superiority over India and China, which had long been subdued by Western civilization on the other.”<sup>27</sup> Ōkuma Shigenobu’s 大隈重信 (1838-1922) *Harmonious Fusion of Eastern and Western Civilizations* is a classic case in point, in the preface to which he makes a strong appeal to the Japanese:

The East has its characteristics, and the West has its characteristics. Which is better is not easy to judge...As contact between the two hemispheres becomes more frequent, unification or fusion of Eastern and Western civilizations is something that is inevitable. Particularly for us who live in one part of the East, this unification or fusion is our mission. Is there anyone who dares to go against this trend? We have to carefully consider how this fusion can be carried out in the future.<sup>28</sup>

In this book, published posthumously in 1922, Ōkuma generally equated Eastern tradition with China, but a more common view at the time was that China and India were the two pillars of the East or Asia, while Japan—being an Asian country occupying a special corner—assumed responsibility for bridging the two hemispheres and bringing world civilization to a higher degree of accomplishment.<sup>29</sup>

---

<sup>26</sup> Ishikawa Yoshihiro 石川禎浩, “Tōzai bunmeiron to Nicchū no rondan” 東西文明論と日中の論壇 (East-West Civilizational Discourse and Its Forums in Japan and China), in Furuya Tetsuo 古屋哲夫 ed., *Kindai Nihon no Ajia ninshiki* 近代日本のアジア認識 (Modern Japan’s Views of Asia) (Tokyo: Ryokuin Shobō, 1996), p.427.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> Ōkuma Shigenobu, *Tōzai bunmei no chōwa* 東西文明之調和 (Harmonious Fusion of Eastern and Western Civilizations) (Tokyo: Waseda UP, 1990), pp.1-2.

<sup>29</sup> Kita Reikichi described Japan as “born to be the heart of the world,” which was “the greatest privilege as well as the greatest duty.” See “Wagakuni no daishimei” わが国の大使命 (The Grand Mission of Our Country), in *Hikari wa Tōhō yori*, pp.149-171.

Between publication of Fukuzawa Yukichi's *An Outline of Civilizational Discourse* (1875) and Ōkuma Shigenobu's *Harmonious Fusion of Eastern and Western Civilizations* (1922), a transformation occurred: the desperate appeal for Western civilization seen in the former seemed quite strange by the time of the latter. Japan in the Taishō era had become a “civilized” country thanks to the efforts made during the Meiji era; the East-West dichotomy for Japan in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century was no longer a matter of choice but of harmonization, whether in a cultural or political sense.<sup>30</sup> Given Japan's resolve to stand alone and even to fuse world civilizations, Nitobe Inazō 新渡戸稲造 (1862-1933), the Japanese thinker and educator and the self-appointed “bridge across the Pacific,” made the following claim when lecturing on the “National Characteristics of the Japanese People” in America in 1932:

My humble opinion is that in love of novelty and the appreciation of the beautiful we are like the Hellenes, though we do not aspire to the level of their intellect; neither do we pretend to rival the Hindoo and ancient Chinese in theorizing. We stick to realities....That is why we maintain our unity and independence as a nation....How short was the glory that was Athens!...India and China with their great gifts will no doubt contribute much to the progress of mankind, but as to being efficient political entities, they give no earnest [sic.] of their future.<sup>31</sup>

At the height of WWII, two (in)famous symposia were convened in Japan in 1942, namely, “Surpassing Modernity” (近代の超克) and “A World Historical Stance and Japan” (世界史的立場と日本). How the attendees of these two conferences endorsed the fascist ideology of imperial Japan has been extensively

---

<sup>30</sup> Koizumi Takashi 小泉仰, “Futatsu no hikakubunmeiron: *Bunmeiron no gairyaku to Tōzai bunmei no chōwa*,” 二つの比較文明論—『文明論之概略』と『東西文明之調和』 (Two Examples of Comparative Civilizational Discourse: *An Outline of Civilizational Discourse* and the *Harmonious Fusion of Eastern and Western Civilizations*), in Mineshima Hideo 峰島旭雄 et al., *Ōkuma Shigenobu Tōzai bunmei no chōwa o yomu* 大隈重信『東西文明の調和』を読む (Reading Ōkuma Shigenobu's *Harmonious Fusion of Eastern and Western Civilizations*) (Tokyo: Hokuju Shuppan, 1990), pp.35-36.

<sup>31</sup> Nitobe Inazō, “Lectures on Japan: An Outline of the Development of the Japanese People and Their Culture,” in *Nitobe Inazō zenshū, dai jūgokan* 新渡戸稲造全集・第十五卷 (Complete Works of Nitobe Inazō, Volume 15) (Tokyo: Kyobunkwan, 1970), p.294. Nitobe named twelve national characteristics of the Japanese people: patriotism, national unity, loyalty, national continuity, self-abnegation, the sense of duty and of responsibility, sense of honor, a cheerful view of life's pathos, sentimentality, love of and contact with nature, talent for detail, and realistic psychology.

discussed. Here only one observation is to be made: in early twentieth-century Japan, as a temporal notion, “modernity” posed as an abstract spatial obstruction, which was to be revised or even surpassed for a “genuine” world history to unfold.<sup>32</sup> Here, the logic of Kōyama Iwao’s statement (cited at the beginning of this section) that was contemporaneous with the two conferences becomes clear. He used the term “the principles of the modern world” to signify the practice of realist diplomacy that was West-originated, nation-state-centric, and embodied in the treaty system. As a matter of fact, Japan had been eager to participate in the system but was denied “proper” interests by the Western powers, which stimulated the country into challenging it. For Kōyama and many Japanese intellectuals at the time, the Great East Asia War was a war in which the suppressed nations gathered under that banner of Japan to rebel against Western hegemony; it represented an effort to overturn “modern principles” with a view to “the establishment of new world orders.”<sup>33</sup> This logic, ideological and fantastic as it seems today, assumed the reason of a philosophy of world history.

Apparently, in pre-WWII Japan what was prevalent was world history of a theoretical kind, which aimed at a non-West-centric historical philosophy. In the early-twentieth-century West, there were also efforts to surpass West-centricity in world historical writing; although the genre could never exempt itself from subjective biases, some Western authors such as Wells had sensed the restrictions of Eurocentrism. In contrast, while Japan proposed a philosophy of world history to support its political claim of the “Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere,” it was a mere variation of ultra-nationalism. Ironically, had it not been that Japan achieved modernization ahead of all other non-Western countries, such a fascist view world history could not have happened. Here we see again the entwinement between world history as a genre and modernization as a Western value.

#### 8.4 The East as Characterized by Easterners: China and India

As is widely known, Asianism in Japan finally developed into the

---

<sup>32</sup> The minutes of the first symposium have been translated into English. See Richard F. Calichman tr. ed., *Overcoming Modernity: Cultural Identity in Wartime Japan* (New York: Columbia UP, 2008).

<sup>33</sup> See note 20.

expansionist project of the “Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere” (大東亜共榮圈) which ended in debacle after Japan’s ruinous defeat in 1945. “The prewar Japanese experience suggests that ‘Asian’ identity as such can only be imagined aesthetically as a utopia; attempts to translate it into political projects inevitably result in a violent erasure of the historical experiences of peoples within Asia.”<sup>34</sup> In other words, to claim a unified Asia is to erase historical differences. Violence might be an instinctive way to level those myriad differences, but Japan proved the infeasibility of that course. Indeed, Asia is too large and complicated for any proper generalization; the only possible way for the existence of an “Asia” is by way of contrast to a “West.” Despite the tenuousness of the idea of “Asia,” it held sway in the genres of civilizational discourse and world history. Further, it was elaborated on by at least two generations of pre-WWII Japanese scholars, who achieved this theoretical depth, paradoxically, through Japan’s successful imitation of the West. Such conditions existed in neither China nor India in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, whose Asian discourse, if any, was rather sporadic and incoherent, despite the fact they were two veritable ancient “Eastern” civilizations. In this section, I will explore Chinese and Indian discourse to demonstrate how the idea of Asia has been closely connected with the experience or interpretation of modernization.

Liang Qichao, one of the leading enlightenment scholars in modern China, once claimed that “from the French Revolution derived nineteenth-century Europe; from the Sino-Japanese War derived twentieth-century Asia.”<sup>35</sup> Apparently, for intellectuals in late imperial China, “Asia” was both modern and political and thus devoid of either historical or discursive contexts. In the meager literature of Asian discourse in early twentieth-century China, the two authors who are most frequently referred to are Li Dazhao 李大釗 and Sun Yat-sen. Li wrote in 1917 that “if the Japanese really want to carry out the ideal of great Asianism, they must first of all acknowledge that China is the cornerstone of Asia...If they uphold the banner of great Asianism to pursue their imperialist goals and grab hegemony of the Far East...they will eventually incite the jealousy of the white people and bring disaster to all Asian races.”<sup>36</sup>

---

<sup>34</sup> Yumiko Iida, “Fleeing the West, Making Asia Home: Transpositions of Otherness in Japanese Pan-Asianism, 1905-1930,” in *Alternatives*, No.22 (1997), p.411.

<sup>35</sup> Liang Qichao, *Zhongguo sishinianlai dashiji* 中國四十年來大事記 (Great Events of China in the Recent Forty Years), in *Yinbingshi heji, Zhuanji* 專集 (Special Collections), No.3, p.59.

<sup>36</sup> Li Dazhao, “Da Yaxiya zhuyi” 大亞細亞主義 (Great Asianism), in *Li Dazhao quanji*, Vol.2,

With acceleration of Japan's militarization, Li's criticism became even more censorious in 1919: "we must realize that 'great Asianism' is just a euphemism for annexation of China...then we must realize that 'great Asianism' is a pseudonym for 'great Japanism'."<sup>37</sup> Li Dazhao's comments are revealing in two respects: firstly, Asianism in early twentieth-century China was not a "project" but was characterized by double resistance simultaneously against Western and Japanese imperialism; secondly, "Asia" assumes no specific place in the civilizational discourse of Chinese intellectuals, as they simply took for granted an equivalence of China with Asia. Such self-centricity is more nuanced but clearly expressed in Sun Yat-sen's elaboration of great Asianism:

What kind of problem is it for the "Great Asianism" we are speaking of? In brief, it is a cultural problem, a problem of comparison and conflict between Eastern and Western cultures.... Eastern culture follows the "kingly way," while Western culture follows the "hegemonic way"...Since you Japanese have acquired the hegemonic culture of Europe and America, and are endowed with the nature of Asian kingly culture, it is left to your decision whether to become the pawn of the Western hegemonic way or to become the guardian of the Eastern kingly way.<sup>38</sup>

Sun Yat-sen seemed to hold no grudge against Japan's being in the leading role in modern Asia, but he shifted (tactfully, perhaps) the topic of great Asianism to an East-West dichotomy and designated the East as benevolent and the West as invasive. Furthermore, the East-West division here bears very little relevance to geography, but is culturally and morally defined. This shows the real concern of the Chinese intellectual world in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, which was characterized by numerous disputes between pro-Westernization advocates and traditionalists. In 1915, Chen Duxiu opened the East-West debate in China by claiming that:

Modern civilizations are strictly divided into the Eastern and Western

---

p.107.

<sup>37</sup> Li Dazhao, "Da Yaxiya zhuyi yu xin Yaxiya zhuyi," in *Li Dazhao quanji*, Vol.2, p.269.

<sup>38</sup> Sun Yat-sen, "Dui Shenhu shangyiehuixisuo deng tuanti de yanshuo," in *Sun Zhongshan quanji*, Vol.11, pp.407-409.

parts. The two representatives of Eastern civilizations are India and China. While there are some differences between the two, they are largely the same in the sense that they do not transcend the phase of ancient civilization. Although they live in the modern world, they are actually remnants of the past. The title of modern civilization is exclusive to the Europeans, which is nothing less than Western civilization...<sup>39</sup>

Chen Duxiu's stance was a radical one; he appealed to abolition of dictatorship politically and eradication of traditional social regulations ethically, acclaiming the Western values of individual independence, freedom, and equality.<sup>40</sup> The most engaged polemic antagonist of Chen Duxiu was Du Yaquan, a strong supporter of traditional Chinese culture, who held a typical view of cultural harmonization:

My opinion is that the difference between Western civilization and our traditional civilization is one of nature, rather than one of degree...Western civilization is as strong as wine, and our civilization is as light as water; Western civilization is as juicy as meat, and our civilization is as coarse as vegetables. Those who are addicted to wine and meat must be cured by water and vegetables.<sup>41</sup>

The devastation of WWI prompted Du Yaquan to further claim that the Western inclination for materialism and action could be offset by the Eastern inclination for self-sufficiency and reasoning.<sup>42</sup> It is clear that the civilizational discourse produced in inter-war China bears resemblance to that of contemporary Japan. Both Japanese and Chinese intellectuals rode on the tide of the "decline of the West" and assigned themselves the mission of rescuing a

---

<sup>39</sup> Chen Duxiu, "Falanxiren yu jindaiwenming" 法蘭西人與近代文明 (French and Modern Civilization), in *Chen Duxiu zhuzuoxuan*, Vol.1, p.136.

<sup>40</sup> Chen Duxiu, "Wuren zuihou zhi juewu" 吾人最後之覺悟 (Our Last Awakening), in *Chen Duxiu zhuzuoxuan*, Vol.1, pp.175-179.

<sup>41</sup> Du Yaquan, "Jingde wenmin yu dongde wenming" 靜的文明與動的文明 (Static Civilization and Dynamic Civilization), in Xu Jilin 許紀霖 and Tian Jianye 田建業 eds. *Du Yaquan wencun* 杜亞泉文存 (Collected Works of Du Yaquan) (Shanghai: Shanghai Education Publishing House, 2003), p.338.

<sup>42</sup> Du Yaquan, "Zhanhou dongxi wenming zhi tiahe" 戰後東西文明之調和 (Harmonious Fusion of Eastern and Western Civilizations after the War), in *Du Yaquan wencun*, pp.346-347.

bankrupt Western civilization. There is a critical difference, however. In China, there was no historical momentum to sustain such a project, which became a mere fantasy, while the project was implemented in earnest in Japan but to devastating effect. Chang Naide 常乃惠 (1898-1947) astutely pointed out that the concept of an East-West dichotomy prevalent in early twentieth-century China was actually learned from Japan, which first had to create a seeming antagonism between East and West before it could attempt to realize the dream of harmonizing the two.<sup>43</sup> While Li Dazhao firmly believed in the fundamental East-West division and highly appraised the view of harmonization proposed by Kita Reikichi, he lamented that such a view should have been formulated by the Chinese rather than by the Japanese.<sup>44</sup>

Liang Shuming's *Eastern and Western Civilizations and Their Philosophies* is widely regarded as the greatest Chinese work of its kind. The three ways of life Liang observed—Western, Chinese, and Indian—represent three different attitudes towards fulfillment of human desires: active, moderate, and passive. These three ways place emphases on material, ethical, and spiritual matters respectively and thus embody three successive phases of human civilization. The Western attitude, Liang argued, was no doubt the most appropriate for satisfying basic human needs, whereas the Chinese and Indian civilizations were simply too engaged in ethical and spiritual issues from early ages to cope properly with material problems and lagged behind the modern era.<sup>45</sup> Despite its philosophical depth and theoretical novelty, in terms of deep structure, Liang's civilizational discourse is no different from Chen Duxiu's view that China and India were two representatives of Eastern civilization that lived largely on traditional legacies. Both China and India in their discourse assume a character that is more temporal than spatial; both countries were faced with the challenge of modernization, albeit different proposals for that modernization were formulated. Significantly, Liang Shuming's and Ōkuma Shigenobu's works were published around the same time and given similar titles. While the former endeavored to find places for Chinese and Indian civilizations in a modernity-centric world history, the latter was optimistic about Japan's vantage

---

<sup>43</sup> Chang Naide, "Dongfang wenming yu xifang wenming" 東方文明與西方文明 (Eastern Civilization and Western Civilization), in Chen Song ed., *Wusiqianhou dongxiwenhuawenti lunzhanwenxuan*, p.282.

<sup>44</sup> Li Dazhao, "Dongxiwenming genben zhi yidian" 東西文明根本之異點 (Fundamental Differences between Eastern and Western Civilizations), in *Li Dazhao quanji*, Vol.2, p.223.

<sup>45</sup> Liang Shuming, *Dongxi wenhua jiqi zhexue*, pp.287-288.

in harmonizing the East with the West.

One point should be clear from the analysis above: Asianism and East-West civilizational discourse constitute two different discursive fields. The former embodies a geopolitical imagination or even ambition facilitated by successful modernization, but the latter is basically an ideological effort to position one's own civilization in the world. The identification of the two in Japan was historically triggered; such conditions were absent in China. The same can also be said of early twentieth-century India.

As a colony of the British Empire for centuries, India's version of the East-West dichotomy was naturally deeply rooted in the Indo-British relationship. Nevertheless, when it comes to the idea of Asia, one author reminds us:

If one accepts that identities are...constructions that are shaped in and through larger discourses, then one must emphasize the absence of such an Asian discourse in the public domain of contemporary India. In this turbulent domain encompassing any number of identitarian debates around caste, community, religion, gender, region, language, and nation, the belongingness to a larger imagined community called Asia does not exist.<sup>46</sup>

What is discussed here is "contemporary India." But the "identitarian debates" that are currently raging are in fact historical inheritances, which were characterized in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century by Rabindranath Tagore as what made a "syncretic civilization" of India: "In an essay...published in 1902, Tagore argued that India's aim through the ages has been 'to establish unity amidst diversity', without eliminating the uniqueness of each [i.e. either] element. In 1912, Tagore elaborated this notion further and postulated that while India's endeavor has been to bring about unity through cultural assimilation, Western civilization has been characterized by self-aggrandizement and suppression of diversity by means of state power."<sup>47</sup> Such is the formulation of Tagore's East-West civilizational discourse, which posits the East as tolerant and inclined to

---

<sup>46</sup> Rustom Bharucha, *Another Asia: Rabindranath Tagore & Okakura Tenshin*, p.xvi.

<sup>47</sup> Sabyasachi Bhattacharya, *Talking Back: The Idea of civilization in the Indian Nationalist Discourse* (New Delhi: Oxford UP, 2011), p.4.



harmonize diversity, and the West as exclusive and threatening to efface differences. This view is inevitably India-centric in its equating India with the East, just as Chinese discourse is naturally China-centric, as is evidenced by Sun Yat-sen's endowing the Eastern "kingly way" with Confucian virtues. Nonetheless, "modernity" plays a particularly significant role in Tagore's view of world civilizations. He sincerely admired the lofty idealism expressed in classical Western humanism; the scientific way to truth is also one of the greatest contributions the West has ever made to the world. But the rise of the nation-state in the modern era has confined humanity within national, or at best Western, borders, with imperialism being considered applicable to those "uncivilized" non-nations, which means most parts of the earth's surface. For Tagore, science was noble in terms of its objective spirit, yet its abuse by modern Europeans in refining massively destructive weapons and stimulating material desires was culpable.<sup>48</sup> As the first Nobel Prize winner from Asia whose rise on the international stage overlapped the period of the "decline of the West," Tagore felt obliged to preach "Eastern spiritual culture" to remedy "Western materialistic culture." To prove the vigor of the East—a spatial idea that Tagore identified with past achievements as virtually all of his contemporaries did—Japan weighed very much in Tagore's civilizational discourse in view of its successful transformation into a modernized country. However, to warn against the overwhelming Westernization and militarization he perceived in Japan on a 1916 trip, Tagore attempted to revise the definition of modernity:

I must warn them that modernising is a mere affectation of modernism, just as an affectation of poesy is poetising. It is nothing but mimicry, only affectation is louder than the original, and it is too literal. One must bear in mind that those who have the true modern spirit need not modernise, just as those who are truly brave are not braggarts.<sup>49</sup>

This new definition of modernity was further clarified in a 1924 speech in China: "impertinence of material things is extremely old. The revelation of spirit in man is modern: I am on its side, for I am modern."<sup>50</sup> By detaching modernity

---

<sup>48</sup> Detailed discussions can be found throughout this dissertation.

<sup>49</sup> Rabindranath Tagore, *Nationalism*, p.93.

<sup>50</sup> Rabindranath Tagore, "Talks in China," in Mohit K. Ray ed., *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore, Volume IV: Essays*, p.779.

from material achievements, Tagore was trying to picture for the East a great future that would be premised on inexhaustible spiritual resources.

As mentioned, Japan was where the notion of Asia took on the most profound significance among Eastern countries. Historically speaking, the burgeoning idea of Japanese Asianism, which later crystallized in *The Ideal of the East*, was brought to the Tagore family in Kolkata by the author Okakura Kakuzō himself in 1901. Tagore was greatly moved by the ideal of an Asian unity as claimed by Okakura, whose *The Ideal of the East* starts with the following statement:

Asia is one. The Himalayas divide, only to accentuate, two mighty civilisations, the Chinese with its communism of Confucius, and the Indian with its individualism of the Vedas. But not even the snowy barriers can interrupt for one moment that broad expanse of love for the Ultimate and Universal, which is the common thought-inheritance of every Asiatic race, enabling them to produce all the great religions of the world, and distinguishing them from those maritime peoples of the Mediterranean and the Baltic, who love to dwell on the Particular, and to search out the means, not the end, of life.<sup>51</sup>

This statement can be viewed as the prototype of Tagore's Asian discourse. Interestingly, as one of the rare Indian thinkers who took the idea of Asia seriously, Tagore found audiences for his Asian ideal only after receiving accolades from the West, in a paradox similar to the fact that Japan's proposal of Asianism was based on its Westernization. But even such an idealist as Tagore was keenly aware of the emptiness of "Asia" as a signifier: "we have not yet been able to develop a universal mind, a great background of Oriental cultures. Our cultures are too scattered."<sup>52</sup> Indeed, when Tagore sought comrades in China for an Asian unity, what he offered was nothing more than a philosophy of the weak: "We in India are a defeated race; we have no power, political, military or commercial; we do not know how to help or to injure you materially. But, fortunately we can meet you as your guests, your brothers and

---

<sup>51</sup> Okakura Kakuzō, *The Ideals of the East*, in *Okakura Kakuzō: Collected English Writings*, Vol.1, p.13.

<sup>52</sup> Rabindranath Tagore, "On Oriental Culture and Japan's Mission," in Mohit K. Ray ed., *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore, Volume VII: Lectures & Addresses*, p.826.

your friends; let that happen.”<sup>53</sup> Such an offer irritated many Chinese at the time: “Unfortunately, as an Easterner born in China, I find clear explanations of Eastern culture neither in Chinese books nor in Tagore’s essays and lectures.”<sup>54</sup>

If Tagore took a humanistic or spiritual approach to Asia, Jawaharlal Nehru’s view was secular and historical. In *Glimpses of World History*, he reminded his first reader, his teenage daughter Indira Gandhi (1917-1984), that Asia is the cradle of all major religions of the world. In the chapter “The Old Civilizations and Our Inheritance,” Nehru emphasized:

But nowhere else, apart from India and China, has there been a real continuity of civilization...It is true that both of them have fallen greatly from their old estate, and that the ancient cultures are covered up with a heap of dust, and sometimes filth, which the long ages have accumulated. But still they endure and the old Indian civilization is the basis of Indian life even today.<sup>55</sup>

In a work that claims influence from H. G. Well’s *The Outline of History*,<sup>56</sup> Nehru did nothing more than characterize China and India as two great, enduring ancient civilizations. This seems to have become their common identity in the modern world, a world that centers on Western politics and economics. As for Japan, Nehru “demonstrated that being Asian did not make him [i.e. Japan] any less morally indignant about oppression and the denial of human rights among Asians. Here was an Asian culture that had not only escaped being victimized by the west, but had actually, in some ways, surpassed the west as a military power and victimizer of others.”<sup>57</sup> But what was Nehru’s concept of Asia?

[T]he whole spirit and outlook of Asia are peaceful, and the emergence of Asia in world affairs will be a powerful influence for world peace....We, therefore, support the United Nations structure which is

---

<sup>53</sup> Rabindranath Tagore, “Talks in China,” in Mohit K. Ray ed., *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore, Volume IV: Essays*, p.746.

<sup>54</sup> Shen Yanbin, “Taigeer yu dongfangwenhua” 太戈爾與東方文化 (Tagore and Eastern Culture), in *Mao Dun quanji*, Vol.18, pp.439-440.

<sup>55</sup> Jawaharlal Nehru, *Glimpses of World History*, p.15.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p.xv.

<sup>57</sup> David Kopf, “A Look at Nehru’s *World History* from the Dark Side of Modernity,” in *Journal of World History*, Vol.2, No.1 (Spring, 1991), p.57.

painfully emerging from its infancy. But in order to have One World, we must also, in Asia, think of the countries of Asia co-operating together for that larger ideal.<sup>58</sup>

Here Nehru was addressing an Asian conference convened in 1947 in Delhi. No Japanese delegates seem to have been present as Nehru makes no mention of any. The speech is political and complimentary, but it is obvious that, despite decades of effort, an Asian identity had not come to anything substantial two years after the end of WWII, when the world was seeking desperately for a new order, for which “Asia” could provide nothing but a “peaceful spirit.”

From the observations made above, it might not be hasty to conclude that from the East-West dichotomy, which was in effect a tradition-modernity dialectic, to the idea of Asia, which was geopolitically devised to cope with a modern West-centric world order, claiming or arguing the East (or Asia) is basically a modern intellectual endeavor. The East, in spite of its historicity, has been thrust into a process of redefinition since the mid-nineteenth century to account for the apparent imbalance in power structure of the modern world. The East-West division has presented perplexing questions to world historians, who are required to explain how world history developed into, and how it will evolve from, this geographical as well as ideological dichotomy. Indeed, many of the polemicists of East-West civilizations do not regard themselves as historians; their definitions of world history, if any, are not subject to any single perspective or framework. Nevertheless, since the East has been pitted against the West, the latter’s rise and fall in history will continue to shape our world view for some time to come. As Itō Shuntarō 伊東俊太郎, a Japanese scholar on comparative civilizations, claimed around 1974:

Now is a great turning point in history....The two great wars of this century [i.e. the 20<sup>th</sup> century] witnessed the Western Europe-centric world make boisterous noises and then come to silence, with “modernity” that was closely connected with this Western Europe-centrism also coming to an end....Indeed, in the past four hundred years it was the Western European world that initiated

---

<sup>58</sup> Jawaharlal Nehru, “Asia Redux,” in Ramachandra Guha ed., *Makers of Modern India* (New Delhi: Viking, 2010), p.345.

so-called “modernity,” but that their world historical narratives were rather biased is also an indisputable fact. The end of the “Western European” period signifies the coming of the period of “human beings,” and the distortions visible in Western Europe-centric world history shall be put right.<sup>59</sup>

It is interesting that Itō separates American from Western European civilization in his seventeen main categories.<sup>60</sup> The diversity of human cultures seems to be better addressed in this way, but American hegemony did not seem to bother him in the mid-1970s (at this early date, McNeill might not have questioned his own America-centric stance, either). Perhaps some political reasons account for Itō’s interpretation as Japan during the Cold War was under the aegis of America. This possibility cannot be excluded since, as demonstrated above, definition of civilizations has always been a matter no less political than intellectual. In any case, complementary to the efforts of claiming Eastern or even global civilizations, de-Westernization is an ongoing project.

---

<sup>59</sup> Itō Shuntarō, *Bunmei no tanjyō* 文明の誕生 (The Birth of Civilizations), in *Itō Shuntarō chosakushū, dai kyūkan: hikakubunmeishi* 伊東俊太郎著作集・第九巻—比較文明史 (Complete Works of Itō Shuntarō, Volume 9: History of Comparative Civilizations) (Kashiwa: Reitaku UP, 2009), p.14.

<sup>60</sup> Itō’s seventeen categories of civilization in human history, in chronological order, are: Mesopotamian, Egyptian, Aegean, Indian, Chinese, Greco-Roman, Syrian, Persian, African, Meso-American, Andean, Byzantine, Arabic, Western European, Japanese, Russian, and American. See *ibid.*, p.31.

## Conclusion: Asia in Cultural Interaction Studies

### **General reflections**

At this final stage, I would like to reconsider the meaning, purpose, scope, and methodology of cultural interaction studies since this dissertation has been written to meet the requirements for a doctoral degree in this newly created field. To be more specific, what is new is not the practice of doing research on the relationships between different cultures, but the conscious focus on those relationships, with a view to wider contexts of human affairs that are not delimited by borderlines, either intellectual or territorial.

In other words, in cultural interaction studies, what is needed is new perspectives and interpretations, since, psychologically, “context” is in itself a notion contingent upon cultural and political definitions. Technically, the materials that furnish this new discipline are mainly gathered on a national scale. It is modern national apparatuses that are sponsoring institutes for cross-border, trans-disciplinary, and multi-lingual studies, although this academic impetus has grown out of the awareness that the nation as a category is no longer sufficient for this globalizing world. In this sense, cultural interaction studies are nothing less than a product of the contemporary age. Nations are competing not in glorifying their own traditions, but in discovering larger stages for their intellectual syntheses, and thus are seeking the power to speak for regions, continents, and even the world.

What is manifest here remains, for better or worse, the relation between power and knowledge, a relation that a considerable portion of twentieth-century academic history had endeavored to confirm. Nevertheless, thanks to the efforts that have been made in recent decades, when it comes to East Asia—the region that my own institute focuses on—now we know more about the legacies shared by its constituents, notably China, Japan, Korea, and Vietnam. It is generally agreed that certain China-originated traditions, such as political and economic institutions, material cultures, written script and even literary genres, were rather influential in peripheral countries. Thought was much trickier, however. While Confucianism claims to be the ethic foundation of

East Asia overall, nationalization or localization of Confucian values has never ceased in these countries throughout their histories. In the modern era, de-Sinicization has even become an express intellectual theme, especially in Japan.

Arguably, “the East” or “Asia,” though not originating in Japan, was employed by the newly modernized country to address both its identification with and aloofness from this non-Western sphere. Japan sought to define an Asia of inherent unity in order to dominate it, with a view to vying with Western powers. India became indispensable in this picture as a spiritual source of Asian civilization parallel to that of China. As it happened, it was the Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore, globally acclaimed as the first non-European Nobel laureate, who travelled and lectured extensively, and raised Asia to a new height of articulation, thus revealing how flexible but problematic was the notion of Asia.

### **Summary of dissertation**

This dissertation explores how Asia was understood by early twentieth-century intellectuals in different parts of the world. Besides the political and economic disadvantages suffered by most Asian countries at the time, ideologically, the idea of Asia was involved in two heated debates: that between East and West and that between tradition and modernity.

This project delves into these dichotomies by using Rabindranath Tagore as the central figure. Three interrelated approaches are adopted, namely, empirical, historical, and theoretical. Both primary and secondary materials are significant in the research. The former are used for a critically nuanced study of Tagore’s civilizational discourse, whereas the latter are drawn upon to indicate how attitudes towards Tagore have fluctuated in different countries in the past century. Through these documents I review Tagore’s relationship with modern intellectual history in various contexts, particularly China and Japan, which is followed by theoretical analyses of world history.

By analyzing Tagore’s grand narrative of East-West civilizations, his exchange of ideas with intellectuals worldwide, and different conventions of studies on him since the 1910s, I hope to have achieved three purposes:

First, clarifying the current state of Tagore studies—chiefly in India,

Britain, America, Japan, and China—which are strongly although not exclusively influenced by an Orientalist perspective, and endowing Tagore’s East-West paradigm with more historical and geographical nuances.

Second, contextualizing the East-West civilizational discourse prevalent in China and Japan in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century in a global environment, and examining how thinkers of different backgrounds such as Tagore, Jawaharlal Nehru, Fukuzawa Yukichi, Okakura Tenshin, Ōkuma Shigenobu, Liang Qichao, Liang Shuming, Feng Youlan, John Dewey, and Bertrand Russell evaluated Japan, China, and even Asia as a whole in the modern world.

Third, exploring the one-Asia slogan proposed in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, which, for historical reasons, did not include the Arab world or follow the post-war classification of “East Asia” or “South Asia.” Furthermore, I have also related the idea of Asia discussed above to world historical narratives, with the axial age theory as the main framework.

### **Future prospects**

Rabindranath Tagore’s instrumental role in theorizing the idea of Asia is explored in this dissertation. His grand narrative of East-West civilizations follows simplistic assumptions and was frequently criticized; however, with the rise of Asia in recent decades, Tagore’s ideal of Asia has been receiving frequent reviews and is critically examined in post-colonial studies.

Although not as world-famous as Tagore, other intellectuals or schools of thinkers in various Asian countries also contributed to the pan-Asian discourse. Therefore, in the near future, I expect to explore the various contexts in which the specific notion of Asia took shape, and connect them to general intellectual trends in the modern world. Similar works do exist, but my own view is that one must understand different contexts and traditions in order to better expand on the bonds between cultures. This is my conviction, as well as my overarching paradigm.

From a spatial viewpoint, what Tagore appealed to in his proposal for an Asian unity was Asia to the east of the Arab world, which he called “eastern Asia” under the influence of Buddhism. This domain of “eastern Asia” roughly corresponds to “the East” in both the Chinese and Japanese languages (*Dongfang* and *Tōyō*, respectively), with China and India being its two pillars



and Japan remaining ambivalent in this classification. Temporally, the idea of Asia or the East did not emerge contemporaneously in China, Japan, and India. Their historical experiences have shaped their respective approaches to self-definition. Furthermore, their different roles in the post-war world order have also influenced their Asian outlooks. Thus, both space and time are crucial parameters in tracing the notion of Asia, or at least the eastern part of Asia, in the modern world.

This future project will have two focuses: to delve into the “Asian projects” of China, Japan, and India from the mid-nineteenth century to the present, and to compare such views of Asia with mainstream world historical narratives and philosophies prevalent in the West, with differentiations within the West being carefully noted. In such a project, Tagore, as one of the prominent figures who reinforced the dichotomized view of the East versus the West, can be contextualized in the formulation of a modern worldview that is a product of the collaborative efforts of intellectuals from both hemispheres. Temporally, although “Asian discourse” is a recent notion, the responses of different Asian countries to the “other” are the outgrowths of centuries or even millennia of experiences. Understanding of these traditions is the cornerstone of solid cultural interaction studies.

## Bibliography

### English and French:

- Andrews, Charles Freer. 2007. Explanatory notes to Rabindranath Tagore, *Letters to a Friend*. In *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore, Volume VI: Essays, Lectures, Addresses*, ed. Mohit K. Ray, 273-422. New Delhi: Atlantic.
- Bangha, Imre. 2011. "Five Responses to Rabindranath Tagore in Hungary 1913-1914." In *Rabindranath Tagore: A Timeless Mind*, eds. Amalendu Biswas, Christine Marsh, Kalyan Kundu, 1-15. London: The Tagore Centre UK.
- Befu, Harumi. 2001. *Hegemony of Homogeneity: An Anthropological Analysis of Nihonjinron*. Melbourne: Trans Pacific Press.
- , 1993. "Nationalism and *Nihonjinron*." In *Cultural Nationalism in East Asia: Representation and Identity*, ed. Harumi Befu, 107-135. Berkeley: U of California P.
- Bellah, Robert . 2003. *Imagining Japan*. Berkeley: U of California P.
- Berlin, Isaiah. 1996. "Rabindranath Tagore and the Consciousness of Nationality." In *The Sense of Reality: Studies in Ideas and Their History*, 249-266. London: Pimlico.
- Bharucha, Rustom. 2006. *Another Asia: Rabindranath Tagore & Okakura Tenshin*. New Delhi: Oxford UP.
- Bhattacharya, Sabyasachi. 2011. *Talking Back: The Idea of civilization in the Indian Nationalist Discourse*. New Delhi: Oxford UP.
- , 2011. *Rabindranath Tagore: An Interpretation*. New Delhi: Viking.
- Burke, III, Edmund. 1993. "Introduction: Marshall G. S. Hodgson and World History." In *Rethinking World History: Essays on Europe, Islam, and World History*. Marshall G. S. Hodgson. Cambridge: Cambridge UP.
- Calichman, Richard F. tr. ed. 2008. *Overcoming Modernity: Cultural Identity in Wartime Japan*. New York: Columbia UP.
- Chang, Hao. 1990. "Some Reflections on the Problems of the Axial-Age Breakthrough in Relation to Classical Confucianism." In *Ideas across*

- Cultures: Essays on Chinese Thought in Honor of Benjamin I. Schwartz*, eds. Paul A. Cohen and Merle Goldman, 17-31. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP.
- Chatterjee, Margaret. 1988. "Welcome Address." In *Rabindranath Tagore and the Challenges of Today*, eds. Bhudeb Chaudhuri and K. G. Subramanyan, 1-3. Shimla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study.
- Chow, Tse-tsung. 1975. *The May Fourth Movement: Intellectual Revolution in Modern China*. Stanford: Stanford UP.
- Collins, Michael. 2011. *Empire, Nationalism and the Postcolonial World: Rabindranath Tagore's writings on history, politics and society*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Crossley, Pamela Kyle. 2008. *What is Global History?* Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Das Gupta, Shakti. 1961. *Tagore's Asian Outlook*. Calcutta: Nava Bharati.
- Das Gupta, Uma. 1983. "A Cultural Nationalism." In *The Visvabharati Quarterly* 48 (1-4): 376-385.
- , ed. 2009. *The Oxford India Tagore: Selected Writings on Education and Nationalism*. New Delhi: Oxford UP.
- , ed. 2003. *A Difficult Friendship: Letters of Edward Thompson and Rabindranath Tagore 1913-1940*. New Delhi: Oxford UP.
- Das Gupta, Uma and Ray, Anandarup. 2009. "Rabindranath Tagore and His Contemporary Relevance."  
<http://www.parabaas.com/rabindranath/articles/pContemporaryTagore.html>
- Dewey, John. 1973. *Lectures in China, 1919-1920*, trs. eds. Robert W. Clopton and Tsuin-chen Ou. Honolulu: UP of Hawaii.
- , 1921. *China, Japan and the U.S.A: Present-day Conditions in the Far East and Their Bearing on the Washington Conference*. New York: Republic Publishing Co., Inc.
- Dutta, Krishna and Robinson, Andrew. 2009. *Rabindranath Tagore: The Myriad-Minded Man*. London and New York: Tauris Parke Paperbacks.
- , ed. 1997. *Selected Letters of Rabindranath Tagore*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP.
- Eisenstadt, S. N. 2006. *The Great Revolutions and the Civilizations of Modernity*. Leiden and Boston: Brill.

- , 2004. "Axial Civilizations and the Axial Age Reconsidered."  
In *Axial Civilizations and World History*, eds. Arnason, Johann P. et al.,  
531-564. Leiden and Boston: Brill.
- , 2003. *Comparative Civilizations and Multiple Modernities*.  
Leiden and Boston: Brill.
- , 1996. *Japanese Civilization: A Comparative View*. Chicago  
and London: The U of Chicago P.
- , 1995. *Power, Structure, and Meaning: Essays in Sociological  
Theory and Analysis*. Chicago and London: The U of Chicago P.
- , 1986. "Introduction: The Axial Age Breakthroughs: Their  
Characteristics and Origins." In *The Origin and Diversity of Axial Age  
Civilizations*, ed. S. N. Eisenstadt, 1-25. New York: State U of New York P.
- , 1986. "Introduction: The Axial Age Breakthrough in China  
and India." In *The Origin and Diversity of Axial Age Civilizations*, ed. S. N.  
Eisenstadt, 291-305.
- , 1973. *Tradition, Change, and Modernity*. New York: A Wiley-  
Interscience Publication.
- , 1968. "The Protestant Ethic Thesis in an Analytical and  
Comparative Framework." In *The Protestant Ethic and Modernization: A  
Comparative View*, ed. S. N. Eisenstadt, 3-45. New York: Basic Books Inc.
- , 1966. *Modernization: Protest and Change*. Englewood Cliffs:  
Prentice-Hall Inc.
- Fairbank, John; Reischauer, Edwin; Craig, Albert. 1989. *East Asia: Tradition  
and Transformation, Revised Edition*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.
- Fallion, Pierre. 1961. "Tagore in the West." In *A Centenary Volume:  
Rabindranath Tagore 1861-1961*, 313-320. New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi.
- Frenz, Horst, ed. 1969. *Nobel Lectures, Literature 1901-1967*. Amsterdam:  
Elsevier Publishing Company.
- Gide, André. 1917. "Introduction." In Rabindranath Tagore. *L'Offrande Lyrique  
(Gitanjali)*, tr. André Gide, ix-xxxiii. Paris: Nouvelle Revue française.
- Guha, Ramachandra. 2009. "Introduction: Travelling with Tagore." In  
*Nationalism*, Rabindranath Tagore, vii-lxviii. New Delhi: Penguin Books.
- Hay, Stephen. 1970. *Asian Ideas of East and West: Tagore and His Critics in  
Japan, China, and India*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP.
- Hegel, G. W. F. 1975. *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History* –

- Introduction: Reason in History*, tr. H. B. Nisbet. Cambridge: Cambridge UP.
- Heuss, Theodor. 1961. "Tagore and Germany." In *A Centenary Volume: Rabindranath Tagore*, 321-322.
- Hurwitz, Harold M. 1964. "Yeats and Tagore." In *Comparative Literature* 16(1): 55-64.
- Iida, Yumiko. 1997. "Fleeing the West, Making Asia Home: Transpositions of Otherness in Japanese Pan-Asianism, 1905-1930." In *Alternatives* 22: 409-432.
- Inoue, Tetsujirō. "'The Gods' Own Way' and World Peace." In *The Golden Book of Tagore: A Homage to Rabindranath Tagore from India and the World in Celebration of His Seventieth Birthday*, ed. Ramananda Chatterjee, 114-116.
- Jack, Ian. 2011. "Rabindranath Tagore was a global phenomenon, so why is he neglected?"  
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2011/may/07/rabindranath-tagore-why-was-he-neglected>
- Jaspers, Karl. 1953. *The Origin and Goal of History*, tr. Michael Bullock. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd.
- Jelnikar, Ana. 2009. "W. B. Yeats's (Mis)Reading of Tagore: Interpreting an Alien Culture." In *Rabindranath Tagore: Reclaiming a Cultural Icon*, eds. Kathleen M. O'Connell and Joseph T. O'Connell, 318-344. Kolkata: Visva-Bharati.
- Kim, Yang-shik. 1989. "Tagore and Korea." In *Rabindranath Tagore in Perspective*, 217-225. Calcutta: Visva-Bharati.
- King, Richard. 1999. *Orientalism and Religion: Postcolonial Theory, India and "the Mystic East"*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Kopf, David. 1991. "A Look at Nehru's *World History* from the Dark Side of Modernity." In *Journal of World History* 2 (1): 47-63.
- Kripalani, Krishna. 2008. *Rabindranath Tagore: A Biography*. Kolkata: Visva-Bharati.
- , *Tagore: A Life*. New Delhi: National Book Trust.
- Kumar Das, Sisir, "The Controversial Guest: Tagore in China." In *Across the Himalayan Gap: An Indian Quest for Understanding China*, ed. Tan Chung, 311-333. New Delhi: Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts.

- Lago, Mary. 1989. "Restoring Rabindranath Tagore." In *Rabindranath Tagore: Perspectives in Time*, eds. Mary Lago and Ronald Warwick, 4-25. London: Macmillan.
- Lewis, Martin and Wigen, Karen. 1997. *The Myth of Continents: A Critique of Metageography*. Berkeley: U of California P.
- Macfarlane, Alan. 1999. "Review of S. N. Eisenstadt, *Japanese Civilization: A Comparative View*." In [http://www.alanmacfarlane.com/TEXTS/EISENSTA .pdf](http://www.alanmacfarlane.com/TEXTS/EISENSTA.pdf)
- McNeill, William H. 1991. "The Rise of the West after Twenty-five Years." In *The Rise of the West: A History of The Human Community*, xv-xxx. Chicago: U of Chicago P.
- , 1979. *A World History*. Oxford: Oxford UP.
- Mishra, Pankaj. 2012. *From the Ruins of Empire: The Revolt against the West and the Remaking of Asia*. London: Allen Lane.
- Morimoto, Tatsuo. 1989. "My Tagore." In *Rabindranath Tagore and the Challenges of Today*, eds. Bhudeb Chaudhuri and K. G. Subramanyan, 286-293.
- Mukhopadhyay, Amartya. 2010. *Politics, Society and Colonialism: An Alternative Understanding of Tagore's Responses*. New Delhi: Cambridge UP.
- Murray, Gilbert and Tagore, Rabindranath. 1935. *East and West*. Paris: International Institute of Intellectual Co-operation, League of Nations.
- Nandy, Ashis. 2003. "Violence and Creativity in the Late Twentieth Century: Rabindranath Tagore and the Problem of Testimony." In *Rabindranath Tagore: Universality and Tradition*, eds. Patrick Colm Hogan and Lalita Pandit, 264-281. Madison: Associated University Presses.
- , 1994. *The Illegitimacy of Nationalism: Rabindranath Tagore and the Politics of Self*. Delhi: Oxford UP.
- Nehru, Jawaharlal. 2010. "Asia Redux." In *Makers of Modern India*, ed. Ramachandra Guha, 340-354. New Delhi: Viking.
- , 2004. *Glimpses of World History*. New Delhi: Penguin Books India.
- Nitobe, Inazō 新渡戸稲造. 1970. "Lectures on Japan: An Outline of the Development of the Japanese People and Their Culture." In *Nitobe Inazō zenshū, dai jūgokan* 新渡戸稲造全集・第十五卷 [Complete Works of

- Nitobe Inazō, Volume 15], 3-367. Tokyo: Kyobunkwan.
- O'Connell, Kathleen M. and O'Connell, Joseph T., 2009. "Introduction." In *Rabindranath Tagore: Reclaiming a Cultural Icon*, eds. Kathleen M. O'Connell and Joseph T. O'Connell, 11-21.
- Okakura, Kakuzo. 1984. *The Ideals of the East*. In *Okakura Kakuzo: Collected English Writings*, Vol.1, 3-132. Tokyo: Heibonsha Limited, Publishers.
- Panikkar, K. M. 1959. *Asia and Western Dominance: A Survey of the Vasco Da Gama Epoch of Asian History, 1498-1945*. London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd.
- Parsons, Talcott. 1991. "Introduction." In Max Weber. *The Sociology of Religion*, tr. Ephraim Fischhoff, xxix-lxxvii. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Pound, Ezra. 1950. "To Iris Barry." *The Letters of Ezra Pound, 1907-1941*, ed. D. D. Paige, 105-106. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company.
- ..... 1950. "To Harriet Monroe." In *The Letters of Ezra Pound, 1907-1941*, ed. D. D. Paige, 19.
- ..... 1912. "Tagore's Poems." In *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse* 3: 92-94.
- Radhakrishnan, Sarvepalli. 1939. *Eastern Religions & Western Thought*. New Delhi: Oxford UP.
- , 1919. *The Philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore*. London: Macmillan.
- Ray, Mohit K. 2007. "Preface." *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore, Volume V: Essays*, ed. Mohit K. Ray, xvii-xxxi.
- Rolland, Romain. 1945. "On Rabindranath Tagore." In *Rolland and Tagore*, eds. Alex Aronson and Krishna Kripalani, 3-6. Calcutta: Visva-Bharati.
- Russell, Bertrand. 2000. "China's Road to Freedom." In *The Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell 15: Uncertain Paths to Freedom: Russia and China, 1919-22*, eds. Richard A. Rempel et al., 260-268. London and New York: Routledge.
- , 1922. *The Problem of China*. London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd.
- Saaler, Sven and Szpilman, Christopher W. A. 2011. "Introduction." In *Pan-Asianism: A Documentary History Volume1: 1850-1920*, eds. Sven Saaler and Christopher W. A. Szpilman, 1-41. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.
- Said, Edward. 2003. *Orientalism*. London: Penguin Books.

- , 1993. *Culture and Imperialism*. New York: Vintage Books.
- , 1984. "Foreword." In Raymond Schwab. *The Oriental Renaissance: Europe's Rediscovery of India and the East, 1680-1880*, trs. Gene Patterson-Black and Victor Reinking, vii-xx. New York: Columbia UP.
- Schwartz, Benjamin. 1985. *The World of Thought in Ancient China*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP.
- , 1975. "The Age of Transcendence." In *Daedalus: The Journal of the American Academy of Arts and Science* 104 (2):1-7.
- , 1975. "Transcendence in Ancient China." in *Daedalus: The Journal of the American Academy of Arts and Science* 104 (2): 57-68.
- Sen, Amartya. 2011. "Tagore and China." In *Tagore and China*, eds. Tan Chung and Amiya Dev, 3-10. New Delhi: SAGE.
- , 2006. "Introduction." In Rabindranath Tagore. *Boyhood Days*, tr. Radha Chakravarty, ix-xxiii. Delhi: Puffin.
- , 2005. "Tagore and His India." In *The Argumentative Indian: Writings on Indian History, Culture and Identity*, 89-120. London: Penguin Books.
- Shurbanov, Alexander. 1989. "Tagore in Bulgaria." In *Rabindranath Tagore in Perspective*, 207-216.
- Spence, Jonathan D. 1991. *The Search for Modern China*. New York, London: W. W. Norton & Company.
- Stalker, Nancy. 2006. "Suicide, Boycotts and Embracing Tagore: The Japanese Popular Response to the 1924 US Immigration Exclusion Law." In *Japanese Studies* 26(2): 153-170.
- Sugimoto, Yoshio. 2010. *An Introduction to Japanese Society, Third Edition*. Melbourne: Cambridge UP.
- Tagore, Rabindranath. 2007. "Crisis in Civilisation." In *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore, Volume VII: Lectures, Addresses*, ed. Mohit K. Ray, 980-986.
- , 2007. "To the People of China." In *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore, Volume VIII: Miscellaneous Writings*, ed. Mohit K. Ray, 1132.
- , 2007. "On Oriental Culture and Japan's Mission." In *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore, Volume VII: Lectures &*



- Addresses*, ed. Mohit K. Ray, 822-830.
- . 2007. *Letters to a Friend*. In *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore, Volume VI: Essays, Lectures, Addresses*, 273-422.
- . 2007. "H. G. Wells and Tagore." In *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore, Volume VIII: Miscellaneous Writing*, ed. Mohit K. Ray, 1237-1241.
- . 2007. "Einstein and Tagore." *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore, Volume VIII: Miscellaneous Writing*, ed. Mohit K. Ray, 1241-1250.
- . 2007. "Interview with F. L. Minigerode." In *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore, Volume VIII: Miscellaneous Writing*, ed. Mohit K. Ray, 1232-1237.
- . 2007. "Romand Rolland and Tagore." In *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore, Volume VIII: Miscellaneous Writing*, ed. Mohit K. Ray, 1211-1225.
- . 2007. "Talks in China." In *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore, Volume IV: Essays*, ed. Mohit K. Ray, 741-805.
- . 2007. "The Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech." In *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore, Volume V: Essays*, ed. Mohit K. Ray, 1-9.
- . 2007. "India and Japan." In *Talks in Japan: A Collection of Addresses Given in Japan – 1916, 1924, 1929*, ed. Supriya Roy, 29-32. Kolkata: Shizen.
- . 1997. "To Indira Devi Chaudhurani." In *Selected Letters of Rabindranath Tagore*, eds. Krishna Dutta and Andrew Robinson, 116-120. Cambridge: Cambridge UP.
- . 1922. *Creative Unity*. London: Macmillan.
- . 1917. *Nationalism*. San Francisco: The Book Club of California.
- . 1917. *Personality*. New York: Macmillan.
- . 1916. "Introduction." In *Shantiniketan: The Bolpur School of Rabindranath Tagore*, W. W. Pearson, 17-24. London: Macmillan.
- . 1916. *The Spirit of Japan: A Lecture*. Tokyo: The Indo-Japanese Association.
- . 1916. *The Message of India to Japan: A Lecture*. New

- York: Macmillan.
- , 1916. "India and Japan." For an electronic version, see:  
<http://www.jaip.org/tagore150japan/110419e.htm>.
- , 1913. *Sadhana: Realisation of Life*. New York: Macmillan.
- Tagore, Rabindranath and Noguchi, Yonejiro. 2007. "Tagore and Noguchi." In *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore, Volume VIII: Miscellaneous Writings*, ed. Mohit K. Ray, 1135-1152.
- Tan, Chung. 2011. "Introduction I." In *Tagore and China*, eds. Tan Chung and Amiya Dev, xxiii-xxviii.
- , ed. 1998. *Across the Himalayan Gap: An Indian Quest for Understanding China*. New Delhi: Gyan Publishing House.
- Thompson, Edward. 2008. *Rabindranath Tagore: Poet and Dramatist*. S.l.: Pierides Press.
- Thompson, Edward. 1921. *Rabindranath Tagore: His Life and Work*. London: Oxford UP.
- Tu, Wei-ming, ed. 1996. *Confucian Traditions in East Asian Modernity*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP.
- University of Toronto Quarterly*. 2008. 77 (4).
- Webb, Adam K. 2008. "The Countermodern Moment: A World-Historical Perspective on the Thought of Rabindranath Tagore, Muhammad Iqbal, and Liang Shuming." In *Journal of World History* 19(2): 189-212.
- Weber, Max. 1967. *The Religion of India: The Sociology of Hinduism and Buddhism*, trs. Hans H. Gerth and Don Martindale. New York: The Free Press.
- Weil, Eric. 1975. "What Is a Breakthrough in History?" In *Daedalus: The Journal of the American Academy of Arts and Science* 104 (2): 21-36.
- Wells, H. G. 1931. *The New and Revised Outline of History: Being a Plain History of Life and Mankind*. Garden City: Garden City Publishing Company.
- Williams, Louise Blakeney. 2007. "Overcoming the 'Contagion of Mimicry': The Cosmopolitan Nationalism and Modernist History of Rabindranath Tagore and W. B. Yeats." In *The American Historical Review* 112 (1): 69-100.
- Yamasaki, Nobuko. 2003. "The Letters between Tagore and Noguchi, 1938." In *Rabindranath Tagore: Universality and Tradition*, eds. Patrick Colm

- Hogan and Lalita Pandit, 41-48.
- Yang, C. K. 1968. "Introduction." In Max Weber. *The Religion of China: Confucianism and Taoism*, tr. Hans H. Gerth, xiii-xliii. New York: The Free Press.
- Yeats, W. B., ed. 1936. *The Oxford Book of Modern Verse: 1892-1935*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- , 1990. Untitled. In *The Golden Book of Tagore: A Homage to Rabindranath Tagore from India and the World in Celebration of His Seventieth Birthday*, ed. Ramananda Chatterjee, 269. Calcutta: Rammohun Library & Free Reading Room.
- , 1913. "Introduction." In *Gitanjali: Song Offerings*, Rabindranath Tagore, vii-xxii. London: Macmillan.

### Chinese and Japanese:

- Ai, Dan 艾丹. 2010. *Taigeer yu wusishi qi de shixiangwenhua lunzheng* 泰戈爾與五四時期的思想文化論爭 [Debating and Discussing: Tagore and China] (sic.). Beijing: People's Publishing House.
- Aporon: *shisō to bungaku* アポロン—思想と文学 [Apollon: Cultural Bridge between the East & the West] 1 (1): *Tagōru tokushū* タゴール特集 [Special Number for Rabindranath Tagore].
- Arai, Kanpō 荒井寛方. 1943. *Amida in zakki* 阿弥陀院雜記 [Miscellany of the Amida Temple]. Hōryūjimura: Ikaruga kokyōsha Shuppanbu.
- Azuma, Kazuo 我妻和男. 2006. *Tagōru: shi, shisō, shōgai* タゴール—詩・思想・生涯 [Tagore: Poetry, Thought, Life]. Kashiwa: Reitaku UP.
- , 1981. *Tagōru* タゴール [Tagore]. Tokyo: Kōdansha.
- Chang, Hao 張灝. 2000. "Cong shijie wenhuashi kan shuzhou shidai" 從世界文化史看樞軸時代 [Viewing the Axial Age from Cultural History of the World]. In *Twenty-First Century* 57: 4-15.
- Cang, Naide 常乃惠. "Dongfang wenming yu xifang wenming" 東方文明與西方文明 [Eastern Civilization and Western Civilization]. In *Wusi qianhou dongxi wenhuawenti lunzhanwenxuan* 五四前後東西文化問題論戰文選 [Selected Articles on the Debate of East-West Cultures during the May Fourth Era], ed. Chen Song 陳崧, 281-293. Beijing: China Social Sciences Press.

- Chang, Peng-yuan. 張朋園. 1979. "Liang Qichao yu Wusi yundong" 梁啟超與五四運動 [Liang Qichao and the May Fourth Movement]. In *Wusi yanjiu lunwenji* 五四研究論文集 [Essays of the May Fourth Studies], ed. Wong Young-tsu 汪榮祖, 277-310. Taipei: Linking Publishing.
- Chen, Duxiu 陳獨秀. 1993. "Ping Taigeer zai Hangzhou Shanghai de yanshuo" 評太戈爾在杭州上海的演說 [On Tagore's Lectures in Hangzhou and Shanghai]. In *Chen Duxiu zhuzuoxuan* 陳獨秀著作選 [Selected Works of Chen Duxiu], eds. Ren Jianshu 任建樹 et al., 663-667. Shanghai: Shanghai People's Publishing House.
- , 1993. "Taigeer shi yige sheme dongxi" 太戈爾是一個什麼東西! [What is Tagore!] In *Chen Duxiu zhuzuoxuan*, eds. Ren Jianshu et al., Vol.2, 683.
- , 1993. "Taigeer yu dongfang wenhua" 太戈爾與東方文化 [Tagore and Eastern Culture]. In *Chen Duxiu zhuzuoxuan*, eds. Ren Jianshu et al., Vol.2, 656-657.
- , 1993. "Dongxi minzu genben sixiang zhi chayi" 東西民族根本思想之差異 [Fundamental Differences of Thought between Eastern and Western Races]. In *Chen Duxiu zhuzuoxuan*, eds. Ren Jianshu et al., Vol.1, 163-169.
- , "Wuren zuihou zhi juewu" 吾人最後之覺悟 [Our Last Awakening]. In *Chen Duxiu zhuzuoxuan*, Vol.1, 175-179.
- , 1993. "Falanxiren yu jindaiwenming" 法蘭西人與近代文明 [French and Modern Civilization]. In *Chen Duxiu zhuzuoxuan*, Vol.1, 136-139.
- Duwei 杜威. 2009. "Duwei boshi zhi Hu Shi jiaosho han" 杜威博士致胡適教授函 [Letter from Dr. Dewey to Professor Hu Shi]. In *Shiyongzhuyi zhi wojian: Duwei zai Zhongguo* 實用主義之我見—杜威在中國 [Ideas of Pragmatism: Dewey in China], ed. Zhang Baogui 張寶貴, 3. Nanchang: Jiangxi Higher Education Press.
- , 2004. "Xiandai de sange zhexuejia" 現代的三個哲學家 [Three Contemporary Philosophers]. In *Minzhizhuyi yu xiandaishehui: Duwei zaihua jiangyanji* 民治主義與現代社會—杜威在華講演集 [The Principle of Government by the People and Modern Society: Collection of Dewey's Lectures in China], eds. Yuan Gang 袁剛 et al, 238-265. Beijing: Peking UP.

- Dong, Fengming 董鳳鳴. 2009. "Taigeer zhi zai Nanjing" 泰戈爾之在南京 [Tagore in Nanjing]. In *Shiren de jingshen: Taigeer zai Zhongguo* 詩人的精神—泰戈爾在中國 [Spirit of the Poet: Tagore in China], ed. Sun Yixue 孫宜學, 29-30. Nanchang: Jiangxi Higher Education Press.
- Du, Yaquan 杜亞泉. 2003. "Jingde wenmin yu dongde wenming" 靜的文明與動的文明 [Static Civilization and Dynamic Civilization]. In *Du Yaquan wencun* 杜亞泉文存 [Collected Works of Du Yaquan], eds. Xu Jilin 許紀霖 and Tian Jianye 田建業, 338-344. Shanghai: Shanghai Education Publishing House.
- , 2003. "Zhanhou dongxi wenming zhi tiahe" 戰後東西文明之調和 [Harmonious Fusion of Eastern and Western Civilizations after the War]. In *Du Yaquan wencun*, 345-350.
- Ebe, Ōson 江部鴨村. 1915. *Tagōru no shisō oyobi shūkyō* タゴールの思想及宗教 [Tagore's Thought and Religion]. Tokyo: Jitsugetsusha.
- Ebihara, Tokuo 蛭原徳夫. 1980. *Roman Roran to Tagōru* ロマン・ロランとタゴール [Romain Rolland and Tagore]. Tokyo: Daisan Bunmeisha.
- Feng, Chongyi 馮崇義. 1994. *Luosu yu Zhongguo: Xifangsixiang zai Zhongguo de yicijingli* 羅素與中國—西方思想在中國的一次經歷 [Russell and China: An Episode of Western Thought in China]. Beijing: SDX Joint Publishing Company.
- Feng, Youlan 馮友蘭. 2001. *Sansongtang zixu* 三松堂自序 [Autobiography of the Sansong Chamber]. In *Sansongtang quanji* 三松堂全集 [Complete Works of the Sansong Chamber], Vol.1, 1-314. Zhengzhou: Henan People's Publishing House.
- , 2001. *Zhongguo zhexueshi xinbian, di qi ce* 中國哲學史新編第七冊 [A New History of Chinese Philosophy, VII]. In *Sansongtang quanji*, Vol.10, 485-658.
- , 2001. "Zhi Liang Shuming" 致梁漱溟 [To Liang Shuming]. In *Sansongtang quanji*, Vol.14, 588-592.
- , 2001. "Ping Liang Shuming zhu Dongxi wenhua jiqi zhexue" 評梁漱溟著《東西文化及其哲學》 [Comment on Liang Shuming's *East-West Cultures and Their Philosophies*]. In *Sansongtang quanji*, Vol.11, 54-57.
- , 2001. "Yu Indu Taiguer tanhua: dongxiwenming zhi bijiaoguan" 與印度泰谷爾談話—東西文明之比較觀 [Conversation with

- Tagore from India: A Comparative View of Eastern and Western Civilizations]. In *Sansongtang quanji*, Vol.11, 3-9.
- Fukuzawa, Yukichi 福澤諭吉. 1981. “Datsu-A ron” 脱亜論 [On Leaving Asia]. In *Fukuzawa Yukichi senshū* 福澤諭吉選集 [Selected Works of Fukuzawa Yukichi], Vol.7, 221-224. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten.
- , 1981. *Bunmeiron no gairyaku* 文明論之概略 [An Outline of Civilizational Discourse]. In *Fukuzawa Yukichi senshū*, Vol.4, 5-254.
- “Ge tuanti huanying Ruosu boshi ji: Luo boshi yan Zhongguo yi baocun guyou guocui” 各團體歡迎羅素博士記—羅博士言中國宜保存固有國粹 [A Report on Dr. Russell Welcome by Many Institutions: Dr. Russell Said that China Should Preserve Its National Essence]. In *Tongwang ziyou zhilu: Ruosu zai Zhongguo* 通往自由之路—羅素在中國 [The Way to Freedom: Russell in China], ed. Cao Yuanyong 曹元勇, 12-13. Nanchang: Jiangxi Higher Education Press.
- Guo, Moruo 郭沫若. 1990. “Taigeer raihua de wojian” 太戈兒來華的我見 [My Opinion on Tagore’s Visiting China]. In *Guo Moruo quanji: Wenxue bian* 郭沫若全集・文學編 [Complete Works of Guo Moruo: Literature], Vol.15, 266-274. Beijing: People’s Publishing House.
- Haga, Yaichi. 芳賀矢一. 1977. *Kokuminsei jūron* 國民性十論 [Ten Theses on the Japanese Character]. In *Nihonjinron* 日本人論 [Theories of Japaneseness], ed. Ikumatsu Keizō 生松敬三, 125-263. Tokyo: Fuzambō.
- Hashimoto, Fukuo 橋本福夫. 1989. “Tagōru no Tōyō teki hyūmanizumu” タゴールの東洋的ヒューマニズム [Tagore’s Eastern Humanism]. In *Hashimoto Fukuo Chosakushū III: Eibei bungakuron* 橋本福夫著作集 III—英米文学論 [Works of Hashimoto Fukuo 3: On English and American Literature], 246-250. Tokyo: Hayakawa Shobō.
- Hsu, Tso-yun 許倬雲. 1988. *Zhongguo gudai wenhua de tezhi* 中國古代文化的特質 [Characteristics of Ancient Chinese Culture]. Taipei: Linking Publishing.
- Hu, Shi 胡適. 1998. “Zhuiyi Taigeer zai Zhongguo” 追憶太戈爾在中國 [Remembering Tagore in China]. In *Hu Shi wenji* 胡適文集 [Complete Works of Hu Shi], ed. Ouyang Zhesheng 歐陽哲生, Vol.7, 625-627. Beijing: Peking UP.
- , 1998. “Women duiyu jindai xiyangwenming de taidu” 我們對於

- 近代西洋文明の態度 [Our Attitude toward Modern Western Civilization]. In *Hu Shi wenji*, ed. Ouyang Zhesheng, Vol.4, 3-22.
- , 1998. “Du Liang Shuming xiansheng de *Dongxi wenhua jiqi zhexue*” 讀梁漱溟先生的《東西文化及其哲學》[Reading *East-West Cultures and Their Philosophies* by Mr. Liang Shuming]. In *Hu Shi wenji*, ed. Ouyang Zhesheng, Vol.3, 182-197.
- , 1998. “Duwei xiansheng yu Zhongguo” 杜威先生與中國 [Mr. Dewey and China]. In *Hu Shi wenji*, ed. Ouyang Zhesheng, Vol.2, 279-281.
- , 1998. “Silun wenti yu zhuyi” 四論問題與主義 [Questions and Isms: IV]. In *Hu Shi wenji*, ed. Ouyang Zhesheng, Vol.2, 274-278.
- , 1998. “Sanlun wenti yu zhuyi” 三論問題與主義 [Questions and Isms: III]. In *Hu Shi wenji*, ed. Ouyang Zhesheng, Vol.2, 266-274.
- , 1998. “Duo yanjiu xie wenti, shao tan xie zhuyi” 多研究些問題，少談些主義 [Study Questions More; Talk Less about Isms]. In *Hu Shi wenji*, ed. Ouyang Zhesheng, Vol.2, 249-252.
- Huang, Wei-Lin 黃威霖. 2011. *Wenmingchayi yu xiandaixing: Taigeer de zhengzhilixiang jiqi dui Zhongguowenming de qipan* 文明差異與現代性——泰戈爾的政治理想及其對中國文明的期盼 [Civilizational Differences and Modernity: Rabindranath Tagore’s Political Ideals and His Perspective on Chinese Civilization]. Taipei: Department of Political Science, National Taiwan University.
- Ichii, Saburō 市井三郎. 1980. *Rasseru* ラッセル [Russell] Tokyo: Kōdansha.
- Igirisu bungaku* イギリス文学 [English Literature]. 1929. 1(7): *Tagōru gō* タゴール号 [Special Issue for Tagore].
- Ikeda, Daisaku 池田大作 and Mukherjee, Bharati. August, 2011. “Arata na chikyū bunmei no uta o: Tagōru to sekai shimin o kataru” 新たな地球文明の詩を—タゴールと世界市民を語る [Poetry of the Global Civilization: A Talk on Tagore and World Citizen]. In *Tōdai* 灯台 [Lighthouse] 611: 44-59.
- Ikuta, Chōkō 生田長江, et al. 1921. *Kindai bungei jyunikō* 近代文芸十二講 [Twelve Talks on Modern Literature and the Arts]. Tokyo: Shichōsha.
- Inadu, Kizō 稲津紀三. 1958. “Tagōru” タゴール [Tagore]. In *Ningen no kyōshi: tōyō hen* 人間の教師—東洋編 [Mentors of Humankind: the East], ed. Furukawa Tetsushi 古川哲史, 231-248. Osaka: Osaka kyōiku tosho kabushiki kaisha.

- “Indo shijin no eiyo” 印度詩人の榮譽 [Kudos to an Indian Poet]. In *Yomiuri shinbun* 読売新聞 [Yomiuri News] on November 16, 1913.
- Inoue, Tetsujirō 井上哲次郎. 1915. “Tagōru shi no kōen ni tsuite” タゴール氏の講演に就て [On Tagore’s Lectures]. In *Rikugō zasshi* 六合雑誌 426: 27-28.
- Ishikawa, Yoshihiro 石川禎浩. 1996. “Tōzai bunmeiron to Nicchū no rondan” 東  
西文明論と日中の論壇 [East-West Civilizational Discourse and Its Forums  
in Japan and China]. In *Kindai Nihon no Ajia ninshiki* 近代日本のアジア  
認識 [Modern Japan’s Views of Asia], ed. Furuya Tetsuo 古屋哲夫,  
395-440. Tokyo: Ryokuin Shobō.
- Itō, Shuntarō 伊東俊太郎. 2009. *Bunmei no tanjyō* 文明の誕生 [The Birth of  
Civilizations]. In *Itō Shuntarō chosakushū, dai kyūkan: hikakubunmeishi*  
伊東俊太郎著作集・第九卷—比較文明史 [Complete Works of Itō Shuntarō,  
Volume 9: History of Comparative Civilizations], 9-242. Kashiwa: Reitaku  
UP.
- Ji, Xianlin 季羨林. 1996. “Taigeer yu Zhongguo: jinian Taigeer dansheng yibai  
zhounian” 泰戈爾與中國—記念泰戈爾誕生一百週年 [Tagore and China: In  
Memory of the Centenary of Tagore]. In *Ji xianlin wenji* 季羨林文集  
[Complete Works of Ji Xianlin], Vol.5, 180-213. Nanchang: Jiangxi  
Education Publishing House.
- Jiang, Menglin. 蔣夢麟. 2008. *Xichao* 西潮 [Tides From the West]. Hong Kong:  
Chung Hwa Book Co.
- Jin, Guantao 金觀濤. 2000. “Zhanwang disange qiannian” 展望第三個千年 [A  
Prospect of the Third Millennium]. In *Twenty-First Century* 57: 20-29.
- Kita, Reikichi 北畠吉. 1928. *Ningenkan* 人間觀 [View of Human Life]. Tokyo:  
Kyōbunsha.
- , tr. 1924. *Inishie no michi: Tagōru kōenshū* 古の道—タゴ  
ール講演集 [The Way of the Old Days: Collection of Tagore’s Lectures].  
Osaka: Pulatonsha.
- , 1918. *Hikari wa Tōhō yori* 光は東方より [Light Comes  
from the East]. Tokyo: Dai Nippon Yūbenkai.
- Koizumi, Takashi 小泉仰. 1990. “Futatsu no hikakubunmeiron: *Bunmeiron no  
gairyaku to Tōzai bunmei no chōwa*” 二つの比較文明論—『文明論之概略』  
と『東西文明之調和』 [Two Examples of Comparative Civilizational  
Discourse: *An Outline of Civilizational Discourse and the Harmonious  
Fusion of Eastern and Western Civilizations*]. In Mineshima Hideo 峰島旭



- 雄 et al. *Ōkuma Shigenobu Tōzai bunmei no chōwa o yomu* 大隈重信『東西文明の調和』を読む [Reading Ōkuma Shigenobu's *Harmonious Fusion of Eastern and Western Civilizations*], 26-46. Tokyo: Hokuju Shuppan.
- Kōno, Toshirō 紅野敏郎. 1971. "Taishōki kyōyōshugi" 大正期教養主義 [Culturalism during the Taishō Era]. In Hashikawa Bunzō 橋川文三, Kano Masanao 鹿野政直, Hiraoka Toshio 平岡敏夫 eds. *Kindai Nihon shisōshi no kiso chishiki* 近代日本思想史の基礎知識 [Basic Knowledge of Modern Japanese Intellectual History], 238-239. Tokyo: Yūhikaku.
- Kōyama, Iwao 高山岩男. 2001. *Sekaishi no tetsugaku* 世界史の哲学 [The Philosophy of World History]. Tokyo: Kobushi Shobō.
- Koyasu, Nobukuni 子安宣邦. 2003. "*Ajia*" wa dō katararetekita ka: kindai Nihon no orientarizumu 「アジア」はどう語られてきたか—近代日本のオリエンタリズム [How "Asia" has been Narrated: Orientalism in Modern Japan]. Tokyo: Fujiwara Shoten.
- Kyōiku gakujyutsu kenkyūkai 教育學術研究会 [Association for Education and Academic Research], ed. 1915. *Sei Tagōru* 聖タゴール [St. Tagore]. Tokyo: Dōbunkan.
- Li, Dazhao 李大釗. 2006. "Da Yaxiya zhuyi" 大亞細亞主義 [Great Asianism]. In *Li Dazhao quanji* 李大釗全集 [Complete Works of Li Dazhao], Vol.2, 106-108. Beijing: People's Publishing House.
- , 2006. "Dongxiwenming genben zhi yidian" 東西文明根本之異點 [Fundamental Differences between Eastern and Western Civilizations]. In *Li Dazhao quanji*, Vol.2, 211-224.
- , 2006. "Da Yaxiya zhuyi yu xin Yaxiya zhuyi" 大亞細亞主義與新亞細亞主義 [Great Asianism and New Asianism]. In *Li Dazhao quanji*, Vol.2, 269-271.
- , 1998. "Zailun wenti yu zhuyi" 再論問題與主義 [Questions and Isms: II]. In *Hu Shi wenji*, ed. Ouyang Zhesheng, Vol.2, 260-266.
- Li, Yongqiang 李永強. 2006. "Liang Qichao yu Jiangxueshe" 梁啟超與講學社 [Liang Qichao and the Chinese Lecture Association]. In *Journal of Heze University* 28(6), 97-100.
- Li, Zehou 李澤厚. 2008. "Qimeng yu jiuwang de shuangchong bianzou" 啓蒙與救亡的雙重變奏 [Duet of Enlightening and Saving Country]. In *Xiandai Zhongguo sixiang shilun* 現代中國思想史論 [On the Intellectual History of Modern China], 1-46. Beijing: Joint Publishing.

- Liang, Shuming 梁漱溟. 2002. *Dongxi wenhua jiqi zhexue* 東西文化及其哲學 [East-West Cultures and Their Philosophies]. Taipei: Taiwan Commercial Press.
- Liang, Qichao 梁啟超. 2005. “Zai Jiangxueshe huanying Ruosu zhi shenghui yanshuoci” 在講學社歡迎羅素之盛會演說詞 [Address for Welcoming Russell at the Gathering Hosted by the Chinese Lecture Association]. In *Yinbingshi heji jiwaiwen* 飲冰室合集集外文 [Addenda to *Collected Works of the Yinbing Chamber*], ed. Xia Xiaohong 夏曉虹, Vol.2, 855-857. Beijing: Peking UP.
- . 1970. “Taiguer de Zhongguoming: Zhu Zhendan” 泰古爾的中國名一竺震旦 [Tagore's Chinese Name: Zhu Zhendan]. In *Yinbingshi heji* 飲冰室合集 [Collected Works of the Yinbing Chamber], *Wenji* 文集 [Monographs], no.41, 47-48. Taipei: Chung Hwa Book Company Limited.
- . 1970. “Indu yu Zhongguowenhua zhi qinshude guanxi” 印度與中國文化之親屬的關係 [Kinship between Indian and Chinese Cultures]. In *Yinbingshi heji*, *Wenji*, no.41, 36-47.
- . 1970. *Zhongguo sishinianrai dashiji* 中國四十年來大事記 [Great Events of China in the Recent Forty Years]. In *Yinbingshi heji*, *Zhuanji* 專集 (Special Collections), no.3, 1-90.
- Lin, Yu-sheng 林毓生. 1983. *Sixiang yu renwu* 思想與人物 [Ideas and Persons]. Taipei: Linking Publishing.
- Lin, Yutang 林語堂. 2009. “Yige yanjiu wenxueshi de ren duiyu Guitui gai zenyang xiangne?” 一個研究文學史的人對於貴推該怎樣想呢 [How Should a Scholar of Literary History Think about Goethe?]. In *Shiren de jingshen: Taiguer zai Zhongguo*, ed. Sun Yixue, 287-289.
- Liu Shu-chin 柳書琴. 2009. *Jingji zhi dao: Taiwan luriqingnian de wenxuehuodong yu wenhuakangzheng* 荊棘之道—臺灣旅日青年的文學活動與文化抗爭 [Road of Thorns: The Literary Activities and Cultural Resistance of Taiwanese Youths Studying in Japan]. Taipei: Linking Publishing.
- Lu, Xun 魯迅. 2005. “Masha yu pengsha” 罵殺與捧殺 [Blame to Death and Praise to Death]. In *Lu Xun quanji* 魯迅全集 [Complete Works of Lu Xun], Vol.5, 615-617. Beijing: People's Literature Publishing House.
- Luosu 羅素. 2004. “Buershiweike di sixiang” 布爾什維克底思想 [Thought of the Bolsheviks]. In *Zhongguo dao ziyou zhilu: Ruosu zaihua jiangyanji* 中國到

- 自由之路—羅素在華講演集 [China's Road to Freedom: Collection of Russell's Lectures in China], eds. Yuan Gang 袁剛 et al., 203-207. Beijing: Peking UP.
- , 2004. "Shehui gaizao yuanli" 社會改造原理 [Principles of Social Reform]. In *Zhongguo dao ziyou zhilu: Ruosu zaihua jiangyanji*, eds. Yuan Gang et al., 3-4. .
- , 2004. "Zai Shanghai qituantu huanyinghuishang de daci" 在上海七團體歡迎會上的答辭 [Address at the Welcoming Party Hosted in Shanghai by Seven Organizations]. In *Zhongguo dao ziyou zhilu: Ruosu zaihua jiangyanji*, eds. Yuan Gang et al., 2.
- Minami, Hiroshi. 1994. *Nihonjinron: Meiji kara konnichi made* 日本人論—明治から今日まで [*Nihonjinron: From the Meiji Era to the Present*]. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten.
- Miyake, Setsurei 三宅雪嶺. 1977. *Gi, aku, shū Nihonjin* 偽惡醜日本人 [The False, Bad, Ugly Japanese]. In *Nihonjinron*, ed. Ikumatsu Keizō, 71-123.
- Morimoto, Tatsuo 森本達雄. 1993. "Tagōru no daiikkai sekai junrei: Nihon-Amerika hōmon tenmatsuki" タゴールの第一回世界巡礼—日本＝アメリカ訪問顛末記 [Tagore's First World Tour: A Description of His Visits to Japan and America]. In *Tagōru chosakushū, bekkā: Tagōru kenkyū* タゴール著作集・別巻—タゴール研究 [Collected Works of Tagore, Supplementary Volume: Tagore Studies], 309-343. Tokyo: Daisan Bunmeisha.
- , 1993. "Tagōru to Okakura Tenshin" タゴールと岡倉天心 [Tagore and Okakura Tenshin]. In *Tagōru chosakushū, bekkā: Tagōru kenkyū*, 186-205.
- , 1987. "Kaidai" 解題 [Explanatory Note]. In *Tagōru chosakushū daijūkan: jiden, kaisō, ryokōki* タゴール著作集・第十卷—自伝・回想・旅行記 [Collected Works of Tagore, Volume 10: Autobiographies, Reminiscences, and Travelogues], 594-612. Tokyo: Daisan Bunmeisha.
- , tr. 1981. *Tagōru no shōgai* タゴールの生涯 [Tagore: A Life]. Tokyo: Daisan Bunmeisha.
- Mushanokōji, Saneatsu 武者小路実篤. 1942. *Kibō to kaisō* 希望と回想 [Wishes and Memories]. Tokyo: Kawade Shobō.
- Nagasaki Tagore Memorial Association, ed. 1960-1965. *Tagōru* タゴール

- [Tagore]. 1-6. Nagasaki: Nagasaki Tagōru kinenkai.
- Nakajima, Takeshi 中島岳志. 2009. “Tagōru, awareru: Taishō shoki no ‘Tagōru netsu’ to shorainichi o megutte” タゴール、現る—大正初期の「タゴール熱」と初来日を巡って [The first visit to Japan of Tagore, R.: Concerning the Cult of Tagore Early in the Taisho Period and His Visit to Japan] (sic.). In *Bulletin of Okura Institute for the Study of Spiritual Culture* 55: 221-261.
- Nakamura, Shunsaku 中村春作. 2009. “Ajia syugi” アジア主義 [Asianism]. In *Nihon shisōshi jiten* 日本思想史辞典 [Dictionary of Japanese Intellectual History], ed. Koyasu Nobukuni, 7-8. Tokyo: Perikansha.
- Nakazawa, Rinsen 中澤臨川. 1915. *Tagōru to sei no jitsugen* タゴールと生の実現 [Tagore and the Realization of Life]. Tokyo: Shinchōsha.
- Nakazawa, Rinsen and Ikuta, Chōkō 生田長江, eds. 1915. *Kindai shisō jyūrokkō* 近代思想十六講 [Sixteen Talks on Modern Thought]. Tokyo: Shinchōsha.
- Niwa, Kyoko 丹羽京子. 2011. *Tagōru* タゴール [Tagore]. Tokyo: Shimizu Shoin.
- , 1993. “Tagōru to Nihon” タゴールと日本 [Tagore and Japan]. In *Tagōru chosakushū, bekkā: Tagōru kenkyū*, 344-368.
- Noguchi, Yonejirō 野口米次郎. 1943. *Sōshiten* 想思殿 [Hall of Thought]. Tokyo: Shunyōdō bunko.
- , 1942. *Tateyo Indo* 起てよ印度 [Rise up, India!]. Tokyo: Shōgakukan.
- Oguma, Eiji 小熊英二. 1995. *Tanitsu minzoku shinwa no kigen: Nihonjin no jigazou no keifu* 単一民族神話の起源—日本人の自画像の系譜 [The Myth of the Homogeneous Nation] (sic.). Tokyo: Shinyōsha.
- Okakura, Koshirō 岡倉古志郎. 1961. “Tagōru to heiwayōzon” タゴールと平和共存 [Tagore and the Peaceful Co-existence]. In *Tagōru seitan hyakunensai kinen ronbunshū* タゴール生誕百年祭記念論文集 [Rabindranath Tagore: Commemorative Essays to [sic.] Rabindranath Centenary Festival], ed. Tagore Memorial Association, 263-269. Tokyo: Tagōru kinenkai.
- Okakura, Takashi 岡倉登志. 2010. “Rabindoranato Tagōru no shisō to kōdō: Tagōru seitan hyakugojoyūshūnen ni yosete” ラビンドラナート・タゴールの思想と行動—タゴール生誕百五十周年によせて— [Rabindranath Tagore’s Thought and Action: For Tagore’s 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary]. In *Tōyō kenkyū* 東洋研究 [Studies of Asia and Africa] 177:1-29 (from the left).
- Okamoto, Yoshiko 岡本佳子. 2008. “Rabindoranāto Tagōru to Okakura Kakuzō (Tenshin): nashonarizumu o megutte” ラビンドラナート・タゴールと岡倉

- 覺三（天心）—ナショナリズムをめぐって [Rabindranath Tagore and Okakura Kakuzō (Tenshin) on Nationalism]. In *Asian Cultural Studies, Special Issue* 17: 49-75.
- Ōkawa, Shūmei, 大川周明. 1962. *Nihon no genkō* 日本の言行 [Japan's Words and Deeds]. In *Ōkawa Shūmei zenshū: daiikkan* 大川周明全集・第一卷 [Complete Works of Ōkawa Shūmei, Vol. 1], 327-405. Tokyo: Iwazaki Shobō.
- . *Indo ni okeru kokumiteki undō no genjō oyobi sono yurai* 印度に於ける国民的運動の現状及び其の由来 [The Current State and Origin of Indian National Movement]. In *Ōkawa Shūmei zenshū: daiikkan* 大川周明全集・第二卷 [Complete Works of Ōkawa Shūmei, Volume 2], 531-632.
- Ōkura, Kunihiro 大倉邦彦. 1961. "Tagōru seitan hyakunensai ni yosete" タゴール生誕百年祭によせて [Foreword]. In *Tagōru seitan hyakunensai kinen ronbunshū*, ed. Tagore Memorial Association, 1-2.
- Ōkuma, Shigenobu 大隈重信. 1990. *Tōzai bunmei no chōwa* 東西文明之調和 [Harmonious Fusion of Eastern and Western Civilizations]. Tokyo: Waseda UP.
- Ōsawa, Yoshihiro 大澤吉博. 1982. *Nashonarizumu no meian: Sōseki, Kipuringu, Tagōru* ナショナリズムの明暗—漱石・キプリング・タゴール [Light and Shade of Nationalism: Sōseki, Kipling, Tagore]. Tokyo: Tokyo UP.
- Qian, Gengsen 錢耕森. 2004. "Taigeer de Zhongguo qingjie: cong Feng Youlan yu Taigeer de tanhua shuoqi" 泰戈爾的中國情結—從馮友蘭與泰戈爾的談話說起 [Tagore's "China Affection": A Conversation between Tagore and Feng Youlan]. In *Study of Sino-Western Culture* 5: 112-119.
- Qian, Zhixiu 錢智修. 1913. "Taieer shi zhi renshengguan" 台莪爾氏之人生觀 [Tagore's View of Life]. In *Dongfang zazhi* 東方雜誌 [The Eastern Miscellany] 10(4): 1-4.
- Qu, Qiubai 瞿秋白. 1987. "Shiyan zhuyi yu geming zhexue" 實驗主義與革命哲學 [Experimentalism and the Philosophy of Revolution]. In *Qu Qiubai wenji: zhengzhilun bian* 瞿秋白文集・政治理論編 [Complete Works of Qu Qiubai: Political Theories], Vol.2, 627-631. Beijing: People's Publishing House.
- . 1987. "Guoqu de ren: Taigeer" 過去的人—太戈爾 [Tagore, a Man of the Past]. In *Qu Qiubai wenji: wenxue bian* 瞿秋白文集・文學編

- [Complete Works of Qu Qiubai: Literature], Vol.1, 331-334. Beijing: People's Publishing House.
- , 1987. "Ping Ruosu zhi shehuizhuyiguan" 評羅素之社會主義觀 [Comment on Russell's View of Socialism]. In *Qu Qiubai wenji: zhengzhilun bian*, Vol.1, 508-511.
- Rikugō zasshi* 六合雜誌. 1915. No.412: *Tagōru hyōrongō* タゴール評論号 [Special Number for Criticisms of Tagore].
- Rōyama, Yoshirō 蠟山芳郎. 1961. "Tagōru to Nihon e no keikoku" タゴールと日本への警告 [Tagore and His Warning to Japan]. In *Tagōru seitan hyakunensai kinen ronbunshū*, ed. Tagore Memorial Association,, pp.271-282.
- Saeki, Shōichi 佐伯彰一 and Haga, Tōru 芳賀徹, eds. 1987. *Gaikokujin ni yoru Nihonron no meicho* 外国人による日本論の名著 [Masterpieces of Theory of Japan by Foreigners]. Tokyo: Chūō Kōronsha.
- Saiki, Sensui 齋木仙酔. 1915. *Tagōru no tetsugaku* タゴールの哲学 [The Philosophy of Tagore]. Tokyo: Tōadō Shobō.
- Sakamoto, Tokumatsu 坂本徳松. 1961. "Tagōru to Ajia nashonarizumu" タゴールとアジア・ナショナリズム [Tagore and Asian Nationalism]. In *Tagōru seitan hyakunensai kinen ronbunshū*, ed. Tagore Memorial Association, 241-262.
- Shen, Yanbin 沈雁冰. 1989. "Duiyu Taigeer de xiwang" 對於太戈爾的希望 [My Expectations of Tagore]. In *Mao Dun quanji* 茅盾全集 [Complete Works of Mao Dun], Vol.18, 423-426. Beijing: People's Publishing House.
- , 1989. "Taigeer yu dongfangwenhua" 太戈爾與東方文化 [Tagore and Eastern Culture]. In *Mao Dun quanji*, Vol.18, 439-443.
- Shen, Zemin 沈澤民. 2001. "Taigeer yu Zhongguo qingnian" 泰戈爾與中國青年 [Tagore and Chinese Youths]. In *Taigeer tan Zhongguo* 泰戈爾談中國 [Tagore on China], ed. Shen Yihong 沈益洪, 154-161. Hangzhou: Zhejiang Literary Press.
- Sōsō no jiyū o susumeru kai 葬送の自由をすすめる会, ed. 2001. *Tagōru to Gandī saihakken* タゴールとガンディー再発見 [Rediscovering Tagore and Gandhi]. Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 2001.
- Sun, Yat-sen 孫逸仙. 1986. "Dui Shenhu shangyiehuiyisuo deng tuanti de yanshuo" 對神戸商業會議所等團體的演說 [Lecture to the Kobe Commercial Association]. In *Sun Zhongshan quanji* 孫中山全集 [Complete Works of

- Sun Zhongshan], Vol.11, 401-409. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.
- Suzuki, Daisetsu 鈴木大拙. 1961. “Tagōrushī ni tsukite omou koto” タゴール氏につきて思ふこと [My Feelings on Tagore]. In *Tagōru seitan hyakunensai kinen ronbunshū*, ed. Tagore Memorial Association, 3-5.
- Tagore Memorial Association, ed. 1959-1962. *Tagōru kinenkai geppō* タゴール記念会月報 and *Sachiya* さちや [Bulletin of Tagore Memorial Association] 1-22. Tokyo: Tagōru kinenkai.
- , ed. 1959. *Tagōru kinenkai kaihō* タゴール記念会報 [Bulletin of Tagore Memorial Association] 1. Tokyo: Tagōru kinenkai.
- “Taigeer zaijing zuihou zhi jiangyan” 泰戈爾在京最後之講演 [Tagore’s Last Speech in Beijing]. In *Shiren de jingshen: Taigeer zai Zhongguo*, ed. Sun Yixue, 64-65.
- Takehashi, Gorō 高橋五郎. 1918. *Jinsei tetsugaku chawa* 人生哲学茶話 [Tea Talks on Life Philosophy]. Tokyo: Daitōkaku.
- Takeuchi, Yoshimi 竹内好. 1981. “Tagōru to Chūgoku” タゴールと中国 [Tagore and China]. In *Takeuchi Yoshimi zenshū* 竹内好全集 [Complete Works of Takeuchi Yoshimi], Vol.5, 220-222. Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō.
- , 1981. “Tagōru kinenkai hen *Tagōru hoka*” タゴール記念会編『タゴール』他 [Tagore Edited by the Tagore Memorial Association and Others]. In *Takeuchi Yoshimi zenshū*, Vol.5, 218-219.
- , 1981. “Hōhō toshite no Ajia” 方法としてのアジア [Asia as a Method]. In *Takeuchi Yoshimi zenshū*, Vol.5, 90-115.
- Tan, Chung 譚中, ed. 2007. *Zhong-In datong: lixiang yu shixian* 中印大同一理想與實現 [CHINDIA: Idealism and Realization] (sic.). Yinchuan: Ningxia People’s Publishing House.
- Tanaka, Ōdō 田中王堂. 1915. “Tagōru ryūkō ni tsuite no ichikansatsu” タゴール流行に就ての一観察 [An Observation on the Tagore Fashion]. In *Meishi no Tagōru kan* 名士のタゴール観 [Views of Tagore Held by Notable Figures], ed. Kiyosawa Iwao 清澤巖, 1-18. Tokyo: Jyōnansha.
- Tang, Yijie 湯一介. 2007. *Xin zhouxin shidai yu Zhongguo wenhua de jiangou* 新軸心時代與中國文化的建構 [New Axial Age and the Construction of Chinese Culture]. Nanchang: Jiangxi People’s Publishing House.
- Tanimoto, Tomeri 谷本富. 1915. “Tagōru wa shijin nomi Indojin nomi” タゴールは詩人のみ印度人のみ [Tagore is Nothing but a Poet and an Indian]. In *Rikugō zasshi* 426: 36.

- Tsukinoki, Mizuo 槻木端生. 1997. “Chūgai Nippō’ shi no Ajia kankei kiji mokuroku” 「中外日報」紙のアジア関係記事目録 [A Catalogue of Asian News in the Chugai Nippo] (sic.). In *Dōhō Daigaku Bukkyō bunka kenkyūsho kiyō* 同朋大学仏教文化研究所紀要 [Bulletin of Dōhō University Buddhist Culture Institute] 17: 1-375.
- Tsurumi, Shunsuke 鶴見俊輔. 1984. *Dyūi* デューイ [Dewey] Tokyo: Kōdansha.
- Wang, Baiyuan 王白淵. 2003. *Toge no michi* 棘の道 [Road of Thorns]. In *Taiwan shishū* 台灣詩集 [Poem Collections of Taiwan], ed. Kawahara Isao 河原功, 7-195. Tokyo: Ryokuin Shobō.
- Wei, Liming 魏麗明. 2011. “Wanshi de luren” *Taiger: cong Shipo, Yiesu, Shashibiya dao Zhongguo* 「萬世的旅人」泰戈爾—從濕婆、耶穌、莎士比亞到中國 [Tagore the “Traveler of Ten Thousand Generations”: from Shiva, Jesus, Shakespeare to China]. Beijing: Chinese Compilation & Translation Press.
- Wu, Sen 吳森. 1979. “Duwei sixiang yu Zhongguo wenhua” 杜威思想與中國文化 [Dewey’s Thought and Chinese Culture]. In *Wusi yanjiu lunwenji*, ed. Wong Young-tsu, 125-156.
- “Wutuantu gongjian Duwei xishang zhi yanlun” 五團體公餞杜威席上之言論 [Address at the Farewell Party for Dewey Co-hosted by Five Institutions]. In *Shiyongzhuyi zhi wojian: Duwei zai Zhongguo*, ed. Zhang Baogui, 21-24.
- Xu, Zhimo 徐志摩. 2005. “Taishan richu” 泰山日出 [Sunrise on Mount Tai]. In *Xu Zhimo quanji* 徐志摩全集 [Complete Works of Xu Zhimo], Vol.1, 311-313. Tianjin: Tianjin People’s Publishing House.
- . 2005. “Ruosu youlai shuohua le” 羅素又來說話了 [Russell Comes to Speak Again]. In *Xu Zhimo quanji*, Vol.1, 364-374.
- Yoshida, Genjirō 吉田絃二郎. 1915. *Tagōru seisha no seikatsu* タゴール聖者の生活 [Tagore: Life of a Saint]. Tokyo: Tengendō Shobō.
- Yu, Kwok Leung 余國樑. 2000. “Zhouxin wenmin taolun shuping” 軸心文明討論述評 [Description and Evaluation of the Discussions on Axial Civilizations]. In *Twenty-First Century* 57: 33-41.
- Yu, Ying-shih 余英時. 2012. “Tianren zhiji: Zhongguo gudaisixiang de qiyan shitan” 天人之際—中國古代思想的起源試探 [Between the Heavenly and the Human: An Exploration of the Origins of Ancient Chinese Thought]. In *Zhongguoshi xinlun: sixiangshi fence* 中國史新論—思想史分冊 [New Interpretations of Chinese History: The Intellectual History Volume], ed.



- Chen Jo-shui 陳弱水, 11-93. Taipei: Linking Publishing.
- , 2010. *Renwen yu minzhu* 人文與民主 [Humanities and Democracy] Taipei: China Times Press.
- , 2007. *Zhishiren yu Zhongguo wenhua de jiazhi* 知識人與中國文化的價值 [Intellectuals and the Value of Chinese Culture]. Taipei: China Times Press.
- , 2003. "Between the Heavenly and the Human." In *Confucian Spirituality*, Volume One, eds. Wei-ming Tu and Mary Evelyn Tucker, 62-80. New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company.
- , 2000. "Zhouxin tupo he liyue chuantong" 軸心突破和禮樂傳統 [Axial Breakthrough and the Tradition of Ritual and Music]. In *Twenty-First Century* 58: 17-28.
- , 1999. "Wenyifuxing hu? Qimengyundong hu? Yige shixuejia dui Wusiyundong de fansi" 文藝復興乎？啓蒙運動乎？——一個史學家對五四運動的反思 [The Renaissance? The Enlightenment? A Historian's Reflection on the May Fourth Movement]. In *Wusi xinlun* 五四新論 [New Interpretations of May Fourth], Yu Ying-shih et al., 1-31. Taipei: Linking Publishing.
- , 1980. *Zhongguo zhishi jiecheng shilun: gudai pian* 中國知識階層史論—古代篇 [Historical Analysis of the Chinese Intellectual Class: The Ancient Period]. Taipei: Linking Publishing.
- Zhang, Baogui 張寶貴. 2001. "Duwei zaihua jingli" 杜威在華經歷 [Dewey's Chinese Experiences]. In *Dewey yu Zhongguo* 杜威與中國 [Dewey and China], ed. Zhang Baogui, 3-63. Shijiazhuang: Hebei People's Publishing House.
- Zhang, Dongsun 張東蓀. 1989. "Du Dongxi wenhua jiqi zhexue" 讀《東西文化及其哲學》 [Reading *East-West Cultures and Their Philosophies*]. In *Wusiqianhou dongxiwenhuawenti lunzhanwenxuan*, ed. Chen Song, 501-514.
- Zhang, Dongsun et al. 1920. "Guanyu shehuizhuyi de taolun" 關於社會主義的討論 [Discussions on Socialism]. In *Xinqingnian* 新青年 [La Jeunesse] 8(4): 1-24.
- Zhang, Junmai 張君勱 and Ding, Wenjiang 丁文江 et al. 1997. *Kexue yu renshengguan* 科學與人生觀 [Science of the Philosophy of Life]. Jinan: Shandong People's Publishing Hose.

- Zhang, Minqiu 張敏秋 ed. 2006. *Kuayue Ximalaya zhangai: Zhongguo xunqiu liaojie Indu* 跨越喜馬拉雅障礙—中國尋求了解印度 [Across the Himalayan Gap: A Chinese Quest for Understanding India]. Chongqing: Chongqing Publishing House.
- Zhang, Rulun 張汝倫. 2011. “Ruguo Taigeer jintian laihua” 如果泰戈爾今天來華 [If Tagore Visited China Today]. In *Dushu* 讀書 [Reading] 384: 28-36.
- Zhang, Shuiqi 張水淇. 2009. “Zhishi guoshi gongju ma?” 知識果是工具麼 [Is Knowledge Really a Tool?]. In *Shiyongzhuyi zhi wojian: Duwei zai Zhongguo*, ed. Zhang Baogui, 101-103.
- Zhang, Yu 張羽. 2005. *Taigeer yu Zhongguo xiandaiwenxue* 泰戈爾與中國現代文學 [Tagore and Modern Chinese Literature]. Kunming: Yunnan People's Publishing House.
- Zheng, Shiqu 鄭師渠. 2012. “Wusiqianhou waiguomingzhe laihoajiangxue yu Zhongguosixiangjie de biandong” 五四前後外國名哲來華講學與中國思想界的變動 [Visits to and Lecturing in China of Celebrated Foreign Thinkers during the May Fourth Era and Transformation of the Chinese Intellectual World]. In *Jingdaishi yanjiu* 近代史研究 [Modern Chinese History Studies] 188: 4-27.
- Zhou, Zhiping 周質平. 1998. *Hu Shi yu Weiliansi* 胡適與韋蓮司 [Hu Shi and Edith Clifford Williams]. Beijing: Peking UP.
- Zhou, Zuoren 周作人. 2009. “Daren zhi weihai' ji qita” 「大人之危害」及其他 [“Danger of the Giant” and Others]. In *Zhou Zuoren sanwen quanji* 周作人散文全集 [Complete Essays of Zhou Zuoren], ed. Zhong Shuhe 鍾叔河, Vol.3, 403-405. Guilin: Guangxi Normal UP.
- , 2009. “Ruosu yu guocui” 羅素與國粹 [Russell and National Essence]. In *Zhou Zuoren sanwen quanji*, ed. Zhong Shuhe, Vol.2, 251-252.
- Zhu, Xueqin 朱學勤. 2009. “Rang ren weinan de Ruosu” 讓人為難的羅素 [An Embarrassing Russell]. In *Tongwang ziyou zhilu: Ruosu zai Zhongguo*, ed. Cao Yuanyong, 7-14.
- Zhu, Yanjun 朱言均. 2009. “Bo shiyanzhuyi” 駁實驗主義 [Rebutting Experimentalism]. In *Shiyongzhuyi zhi wojian: Duwei zai Zhongguo*, ed. Zhang Baogui, 104-107.



# Index

## A

America.14, 44, 72, 77, 79, 81, 83, 86, 116,  
119, 120, 131, 136, 145-147, 152, 201,  
202, 209, 212, 220

Andrews, C.F..... 93

Arai, Kanpō..... 100

Asia 1-5, 9, 13, 16, 19, 24-27, 29-32, 34-38,  
44, 47, 48, 50-57, 63, 65, 67-69, 75, 76,  
78-83, 85-87, 89, 90, 93, 96-99, 102,  
107-109, 111, 113, 120, 126, 139, 141,  
143, 144, 165, 167, 169, 170-172, 176,  
184, 192, 195-197, 205-209, 211, 212,  
215-219, 221-224

Asianism .... 12, 26, 29, 30, 56, 68, 87, 88,  
140, 207, 208, 210, 211, 212, 214, 217

Axial (age, civilization) .....5, 58, 169,  
172-183, 185-189, 192-197, 201-204,  
223

Azuma, Kazuo ..... 106, 107

## B

Bakunin, Mikhail ..... 116

Bangladesh..... 19, 37

Befu, Harumi..... 70, 78

Bellah, Robert .....58, 188n

Bengal ..... 60, 92, 137

Bengali 2, 13, 17, 18, 22, 29, 37, 39, 41, 92,  
106, 137-139

Bergson, Henri-Louis ..... 117

Berlin, Isaiah ..... 11, 12, 18, 21, 33

Buddha..... 14, 20, 41, 102, 170n, 203

Buddhist... 75, 96, 103, 139, 152, 153, 173

## C

Chang, Hao..... 179n, 186n

Chang, Naide..... 214

Chen, Duxiu 28, 87, 132, 134-137, 141, 155,  
160, 212-214

China 3, 4, 5, 16, 18, 24, 26-34, 36, 38, 48-50,  
54-58, 63, 67, 68, 72, 73, 75, 79, 80-85,  
87, 88, 91, 94, 97, 99, 103, 108, 110,  
111, 113-127, 129-139, 141-146,  
48-159, 161-165, 169-174, 176-184,  
188, 189, 192, 194, 195, 197, 202-206,  
208-218, 221-224

Chow, Tse-tsung ..... 114

Confucian .... 139, 152, 153, 156, 173, 179,  
181, 182, 184, 188, 205, 216, 222

Confucianism..... 174, 178, 179, 181, 183,  
184, 189, 194, 205, 221

Confucius..... 170, 178, 179, 181, 203, 217

## D

Dao ..... 147, 178-182, 188

Das Gupta, Uma ..... 22, 60n, 78

Driesch, Hans ..... 118

Du, Yaquan..... 155, 213

## E

East Asia .....5, 34, 56, 69, 78, 86, 100,  
169-174, 183, 184, 192, 195-197, 208,  
210, 221, 223

East-West ..2, 3, 4, 7, 9, 12, 15, 16, 20, 25,  
28, 29, 31, 34, 36, 37, 39, 46, 47, 50,  
58, 59, 63, 69, 73, 79, 113, 122, 126,

127, 130, 133, 134, 139, 146, 152, 153,  
157, 162, 169, 198, 199, 201, 203, 206,  
208, 209, 212, 214, 215, 219, 222, 223  
Ebihara, Tokuo..... 107  
Einstein, Albert..... 36, 115, 163  
Eisenstadt, S.N. ....58, 173, 174, 184, 185,  
186-196, 226, 227, 229  
Eliot, T.S. .... 15  
England..... 13-15, 39, 41, 84, 131  
Eucken, Rudolf..... 116  
Europe 1, 10, 19, 44, 47, 48, 52-55, 60, 61,  
76, 77, 79, 81, 88, 116, 117, 124, 134,  
140, 143, 157, 160, 202, 203, 205, 206,  
208, 211, 212, 219

## **F**

Far East .... 53, 63, 69, 81, 86, 88, 93, 204,  
211, 226  
Feng, Youlan . 27, 35, 36, 56, 81, 119, 120,  
141, 145, 146, 148-154, 157, 159, 163,  
164, 223  
Foucault, Michel..... 10  
France .....25, 59, 61, 136, 205  
Fukuzawa, Yukichi

## **G**

Gandhi, Mahatma ..31, 100, 102, 107, 218  
Germany.....23, 24, 59, 61, 62, 82  
Gide, André ..... 41, 42, 44, 60  
*Gitanjali*..13-15, 17, 19, 39-43, 45, 46, 60,  
141  
Gramsci, Antonio..... 10  
Greece .....57, 169, 170, 172, 202  
Guo, Moruo..... 118, 133, 134

## **H**

Haga, Yaichi.....71, 73, 74, 77  
Hay, Stephen...29, 31, 48, 56, 73, 94, 144,  
149, 150, 154  
Hegel, G.W.F. ....53, 103, 192, 195, 201,  
203-206  
Helmolt, H.F..... 201  
Herodotus ..... 10  
Hesse, Hermann ..... 102  
Hsu, Tso-yun..... 186  
Hu, Shi... 121-123, 127-129, 133, 135, 139,  
157-160, 162-164

## **I**

Ibsen, Henrik..... 116  
Ikeda Daisaku ..... 108  
Immigration Act of 1924..... 77, 97  
India ..... 2, 3, 5, 9, 10-12, 14-16, 18-24,  
26-29,31-39, 41, 43-46, 48-57, 59, 61,  
63, 68, 72, 73, 75, 77-79, 81, 82, 85, 87,  
90-92, 94-98, 100, 102, 103, 110, 125,  
126, 137, 140-146, 149, 152, 156, 161,  
162, 164, 169, 170-172, 176, 177, 188,  
195, 202-206, 208-212, 214, 215,  
217-219, 222-224  
Inoue, Tetsujirō .....95, 98, 109  
Islamic.....10, 57, 204  
Israel..... 169, 172, 202  
Itō, Shuntarō .....219, 220

## **J**

Japan..... 3-5, 16, 24-27, 29-32, 34-36, 38,  
48-50,54-59, 63, 65, 67-110, 113-116,  
120, 121, 133, 139, 144, 149, 156, 169,  
170, 171-174, 183, 184, 188, 189-193,

195-197, 205-218, 220-224  
 Jaspers, Karl..... 53, 54, 57, 169, 170, 172,  
 175-178, 181, 185, 188, 192-196,  
 201-206  
 Ji, Xianlin ..... 30, 143, 144  
 Jiang, Menglin ..... 118, 119, 120  
 Jin, Guantao..... 194  
 Joyce, James ..... 15

## K

Kawakami, Hajime..... 116  
 Kita, Reikichi ..... 97, 209, 214  
 Kolkata..... 12, 13, 18, 36, 54, 72, 79, 217  
 Korea.....26, 27, 31, 34, 108, 110, 171, 174,  
 184, 221  
 Koyasu, Nobukuni..... 171  
 Kropotkin, Peter..... 116  
 Kumārajīva ..... 139

## L

Lago, Mary .....12, 14-16  
 Lan, Gongwu ..... 128  
 Laozi .....62, 147, 150, 154, 170, 182, 203  
 Lawrence, D.H..... 15  
 Li, Zehou .....115, 138, 139, 159  
 Liang, Qichao 28, 116, 117, 119, 133, 134,  
 137, 139, 159-161, 211, 223  
 Liang, Shuming.....36, 138, 139, 146, 152,  
 153, 155-157, 159, 160, 163, 164, 214,  
 223  
 Lin, Yu-sheng..... 135, 136  
 Lin, Yutang ..... 134

## M

Weber, Max ..... 172, 188, 193, 205, 206  
 May Fourth, the ..... 5, 113-116, 119, 121,

122,127, 130, 135-137, 139, 152, 155,  
 157, 159  
 McNeill, William .....200-202, 220  
 Meiji ... 70-74, 86-88, 96, 98, 190, 191, 209  
 Minami, Hiroshi ..... 70, 73, 74, 86  
 Miyake, Setsurei..... 71, 74  
 Morimoto, Tatsuo ..... 72, 73, 100, 102,  
 105-107  
 Motoori, Norinaga ..... 72  
 Mukherjee, Bharati ..... 108  
 Murray, Gilbert ..... 47  
 Mushanokōji, Saneatsu .....100, 116  
 Mussolini, Benito..... 161  
 Mysticism .... 14, 15, 32, 33, 38, 39, 43, 44,  
 50, 62, 137n

## N

Nakajima, Takeshi ..... 93, 109  
 Nandy, Ashis .....17, 21, 33  
 Nationalism .. 14, 16, 21-25, 33, 48, 55-58,  
 72-74, 77-79, 92, 104, 106, 107, 161,  
 216  
 Nehru, Jawaharhal.. 52, 53, 102, 218, 219,  
 223  
*Nihonjinron* ... 4, 67-75, 77, 78, 80, 84, 86,  
 87, 89, 90, 113  
 Nitobe, Inazō .....209, 210  
 Nobel Prize .1, 9, 12, 13, 15, 18-21, 24, 30,  
 34, 38, 39, 42-47, 50-52, 60, 62, 72, 90,  
 92, 96, 97, 102, 105, 115, 141, 164,  
 216  
 Noguchi, Yonejirō .....26, 27, 99, 100

## O

Okakura, Kakuzō (Tenshin) .....26, 34, 54,  
 55, 68, 78, 92, 104, 106, 108, 215, 217,

223  
 Ōkawa, Shūmei .....96, 97, 99  
 Ōkuma, Shigenobu .....208, 209, 214, 223  
 Ōkura, Kunihiko .....103, 108  
 Orientalism .....4, 9, 10, 11, 12, 16, 29, 31,  
 32, 36, 37, 52, 57, 62, 67, 171, 198  
**P**  
 Pound, Ezra..... 15, 41-45, 51, 60, 62  
 Puyi..... 87  
**Q**  
 Qu, Qiubai..... 129, 131, 134  
**R**  
 Radhakrishnan,Sarvepalli... 20, 21, 44, 53  
 Ranke, Leopold von ..... 201  
 Reischauer, Edwin O..... 86, 172, 184  
 Rolland, Romain. 36, 60, 61, 102, 107, 162  
 Rothenstein, William..... 13  
**S**  
*Sadhana* ..... 14, 41, 42, 50, 120  
 Said .....9-12, 21, 29, 57, 129, 198  
 Schwartz, Benjamin .... 175-182, 185, 188,  
 193  
 Sen, Amartya .....18, 21, 30, 32, 33, 37-39,  
 53, 122, 143, 150  
 Shen, Yanbin.....132, 133, 137, 218  
 Shen, Zemin ..... 137  
 Showa..... 70, 74  
 Spence, Jonathan D..... 115  
 Spengler, Oswald ..... 193, 201  
 Sugimoto, Yoshio.....67, 69, 70, 72, 77, 89,  
 184  
 Sun, Yat-sen..... 88, 211, 212

Suzuki, Daisetsu..... 103

## **T**

Taishō..... 74, 91, 93, 96, 99, 109, 209  
 Taiwan. 12, 26, 31, 34, 108, 110, 139, 145,  
 173  
 Takahashi, Gorō ..... 96  
 Takeuchi, Yoshimi .. 80, 87, 90, 91, 94, 99,  
 100, 104, 106, 109, 110  
 Tan, Chung..... 18n  
 Tanaka, Ōdō ..... 94  
 Tang, Yijie ..... 181n  
 Tanimoto, Tomeri ..... 95, 109  
 Tao, Xingzhi ..... 121  
 Thompson, Edward .. 15, 18, 33, 44, 59, 60  
 Tolstoy, Leo .....102, 116  
 Toynbee, Arnold.....193, 201  
 Twenty-One Demands ..... 82, 108

## **U**

United States, the .. 41, 72, 77, 83, 90, 97,  
 175, 201, 206  
 Upanishads, the..... 14, 20, 41, 58, 63, 170

## **V**

Visva-Bharati .....46, 59, 145

## **W**

Wang, Baiyuan ..... 110  
 Weil, Eric..... 186  
 Wells, H.G. .... 161, 199-201  
 Wen, Yiduo ..... 172  
 Western Europe...136, 187, 193, 194, 197,  
 202, 204, 206, 219, 220  
 Wu, Zhihui..... 134

**X**

Xu, Zhimo ..... 139

**Y**

Yeats, W.B..... 12-14, 16-18, 21, 39-44, 51,  
54, 59, 60, 62, 63

Yu, Ying-shih 114, 172, 175, 178, 180-182,

186, 187, 193

**Z**

Zhang, Dongsun..... 131, 132, 157

Zhou, Enlai ..... 142

Zhou, Zuoren ..... 129, 130, 132, 133

Zhuangzi..... 182

Zoroaster .....170, 203