

EDITOR'S NOTE¹

This volume includes seven case studies dedicated to various aspects of the twentieth-century intellectual and cultural history of China, including colonial Taiwan and Manchukuo. They cover a period of roughly one hundred years, from the 1910s to today. These case studies are supplemented with an essay contemplating new methodological paradigms for Sinology and Chinese studies as academic disciplines.

The research articles in this volume focus on diverse topics, such as the intellectual-value and human-life-oriented debates of the May Fourth period (Vrhovski), the creation of new music during the Republican period (Chaloupková), the circulation of ideas and literary forms between Japan and its colonies of Taiwan and Manchukuo (Blahota), the implementation of new ideology in literature and propaganda in the 1950s and early 1960s (Andrš, Guleva), and projections of the utopian belief in science in science fiction and the transformation of this genre from early twentieth-century China to the contemporary Sinophone world (Song).

On the most general level these topics are united by a process that the actors involved perceived as “modernization”, that is, the import of new ideas from the vaguely understood “progressive West” in opposition to “backward China”. As ample previous research has documented and as the case studies collected here confirm, this was not a simple copy-paste process. Quite the contrary, it involved uncertainty, difficult deliberations and interpretations (sometimes complex, in other cases superficial), adaptations, and conscious or unconscious transformation of the imported models. New evaluations and reconceptualizations of the domestic tradition to fit the paradigm of modernity were an indispensable part of this process.

Most research that examines modernization, juxtaposing it with tradition in China, does so in the context of the late imperial and Republican periods. However, we also included articles exploring literature and propaganda from the People's Republic of China (PRC); one paper also examines the broader Sinophone world. The post-war geopolitical situation sometimes obscures the fact that after 1949 the new political regime in the PRC did not abandon China's modernization programme. Instead, only the perceived source of modernity was changed: the Soviet Union became the new model to follow instead of

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previous templates based on Chinese intellectuals' personal experience of and knowledge about the U.S.A, France, and Germany, partly mediated through Japan.

Despite the diversity of topics and approaches of the studies in this volume, the authors have revealed two aspects of the Chinese search for modernity. The first was the close relationship between intellectual and cultural practices on the one hand and social issues on the other. We specifically addressed this aspect in the call for papers for this volume, expressed there as “mirroring the present”. The editors certainly did not have in mind Lenin's theory of reflection, well known to Chinese scholars from their obligatory classes of Marxism-Leninism. Mirroring in our case does not imply images mechanistically projected from matter to mind; rather it is understood as a metaphor of the inescapable presence in some way or other of the socio-political conditions of the historical moment in which the ideas and cultural production under discussion arose. Thus, the selected cases presented in this volume, each in its own way, demonstrate the situatedness of the intellectual and cultural endeavours of Chinese intellectuals in their search for modernity. Even Mingwei Song, who presents multifaceted variations of utopia, dystopia, and heterotopia primarily as discursive constructs employed by contemporary writers for whom “words are worlds”, still has to situate the science-fiction works under scrutiny in contemporary reality.

Given the focus on modernization, it is natural that the second shared concern of these case studies is the relationship between new breakthroughs and old traditions, including modern transformations of the old culture. In some articles the question of tradition is prominent, like Jan Vrhovski's discussion of Jiang Menglin's contribution to the *rensheng guan* 人生觀 debate, Lenka Chaloupková's exploration of creative dialogue between Western and Chinese musical traditions, and Dušan Andrš's perceptive reading of Feng Zikai's essays written in response to his life in the “new society” of the PRC.

Positionality and tradition, or rather traditions, are also at the centre of Jana Rošker's conceptual article about methodological issues in contemporary Sinology and Chinese studies. With her proposal of “transculturally aware research” she joins a long and still open debate about knowledge production in Sinology, including its position between the humanities and social sciences. This debate has been evolving for decades, and Rošker summarizes here the important arguments that have been raised. Unlike most previous participants in these discussions, she draws on her expertise in philosophy and approaches the problem from the general perspective of epistemology and cultural translation theory. To our knowledge this is also the first attempt to open such a discussion in post-Communist Europe, where Sinologists have thus far largely avoided this topic, and it is hoped it will open new discussion on this important issue.

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