

# A Peripheral Vision of China's Historiography

## Ups and Downs of Asian History

Wang Yuanzhou, Beijing University

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The long historiographical tradition in China makes ancient Chinese history the focus of education and study at the history departments of Beijing University and other Chinese universities. In the same way, the field of world history emphasizes Western history while Asian history (Oriental History) is neglected. As for Asian History in which China plays a part, although relatively independent in ancient times due to their limited contacts with the West, only a small number of university departments set up history courses related to countries such as Korea, Japan and India while failing to form a systematic course of Asian History like the General History of China and Western History.

Therefore, modern Chinese historiography forms neither a full system composed of a national history, a Western history and an Asian history like what Japan has done, nor a system of regional histories. Since 1949, with the changes at home and abroad, Asian History has received unprecedented attention. However, Asian History has not been separated from the World History to establish its own system. Moreover, with the expansion of Asian History into the History of Asia and Africa and the History of Asia, Africa and Latin America, the integrity and independence of Asian history faces further challenges.

For a while after reform and the opening-up of China, the History of Asia, Africa and Latin America received less emphasis, but recently it has been reinforced. The general history courses designated as compulsory professional courses for students majoring in history at universities in recent years have also been reformed. Moreover, some regional histories like the History of Asia begin to re-emerge in history departments of some universities. The changes in the curriculum in history departments of the universities reflect the efforts made and the difficulties encountered in establishing a system of peripheral references for China's modern historiography.

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## I. Neighboring Developments Neglect

Even today, historiography plays an important role as it did in the formation of nation-states. Probably because national history is essential in the recognition of a nation, national history receives more emphasis than world history in the development of modern history. Strictly speaking, according to Qi Shirong, World History as a science began in China after 1949. As to the reason why World History formed later than national history, he believes that China lagged far behind other countries in modern times, and that she lost the courage to absorb exotic cultures, and so became totally ignorant of the world situation and foreign affairs.<sup>1</sup> This interpretation does not seem consistent with the facts, because recent history itself has developed from the study of western cultures,

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<sup>1</sup> Qi Shirong, "The History and Prospect of World Historiography in China," In Historical Research by Capital Normal University, vol.1, Beijing: Capital Normal University Press, 1999, p.211.

and western history has been the centre of education in recent world history. If we say that we are ignorant of foreign things, the ignorance of China's neighbors is more serious than the ignorance of the European and American powers. In 1880, the Chinese envoy to Japan He Ruzhang, wrote a letter to Li Hongzhang, the Beijing Minister at that time, without knowing whether Prince Regent Lee Haŭng and the former leading representative governor Lee Yuwŏn referred to the same person.<sup>2</sup> Set against the background of modern Korean history, Guo Moruo's novel Shepherd's Mourning expressed his sympathy for Korea, a Japanese colony at that time. However, he actually knew extremely little about Korean history. During his visit to North Korea in 1958, Guo Moruo saw the monument to Chŏng Mongju in Kaesŏng and mentioned it in one of his poems. However, Li Shaoyi, who had worked with the Chinese Volunteers in Korea, insisted that Chŏng Mongju was Chinese. Therefore, Guo Moruo could not determine the identity of Chŏng Mongju, and he finally wrote to Korean deputy premier Hong Myŏnghŭi for advice. At last, Jian Bozan and Zhou Yiliang clarified the matter.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, Lu Simian recalls: "Many people had no idea where the country was during the War of 1894. They only knew that the country was maybe in Asia ... There were also some people who said that the Japanese soldiers knew nothing about geography when they came to China, and it was Li Hongzhang who sent them those maps."<sup>4</sup> Most history departments in Chinese universities only began to set up courses related to the history of Japan in the years after the "9.18" Incident in 1931.

Chinese ignorance of the neighboring areas resulted from being too

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<sup>2</sup> *The Historical Materials for Sino-Japan and Sino-Korea relations During Qing Dynasty*, vol.2, Taipei: Institute of modern history, Academia Sinica, 1972, p.445.

<sup>3</sup> "Letters and Poetry from Guo Moruo to Jian Bo Zan," *Journal of Beijing University*, no.3, 1978, p.14.

<sup>4</sup> Lu Simian, *Learning Recording in Haolu*, San Lian Bookstore, 1996, pp.350-351.

conceited, not from a loss of self-confidence. When the country considered itself the center of Asia and the Heavenly Kingdom, official Chinese historiography included the history of the surrounding areas as “a biography of foreign peoples.” However, the history of China was recorded for China, not for all the other countries,<sup>5</sup> and therefore, official Chinese historiography did not see neighboring countries and nations as independent subjects, but rather focused on the records of their contacts with China. Generally speaking, before recent times, modern Chinese intellectuals took little notice of other countries apart from Chinese history.

In modern times, the big colonial powers broke the old suzerain and vassal relations, and the Chinese people transferred attention to those powers. Some people began to show their interest in western history, while paying little attention to the histories of Vietnam, Korea and other neighboring countries. Even after the rise of the new historiography, Fu Sinian still admitted that we Chinese will not solve the historical records over the four ethnic issues.<sup>6</sup> Wang Tongling also commented that “our scholarly officials were all focused on Chinese culture and self-conceited; they insisted that our people were much more advanced than other nations who were regarded as savage minorities. Furthermore, they had no information of locations and the cultures of these minorities, including our neighbors Korea and Japan, let alone their histories. Few of our young people studying abroad study history, let alone Japanese

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<sup>5</sup> Zhang Taiyan, “On disadvantages of Studying Remedy,” *Huaguo Monthly* 12, no.1, 1924. Quoted from *Philosophy on Innovation - Zhang Taiyan Selective*, Shanghai: Shanghai Fareast Press, 1996, p.542.

<sup>6</sup> Fu Sinian, “Working Fun in Historical Language Research Institute.” *Sketches on Historical Materials and Others*, Laoning: Laoning Education Press, 1997, p.49. In this regard, please refer to Luo Zhitian, “Expanding Historial Materials As Much As Possible and Ignoring Twenty-Four Histories ... a Weird Phenomenon in New Historiography of Republican China,” *History Research*, no.4, 2000; San Bing, *Preference of Borderlands and Local Land Recalling and China Studies and Sinology ... the Communication Documents in Modern Chinese and Foreign Academic Circles*, Zhejiang People Press, 1999, pp.1~30.

history; therefore they have little knowledge of the oriental countries and their historical relations.”<sup>7</sup> In his work “On Japan” (1928), Dai Jitao also criticized that the Chinese people were unwilling to study Japan: “China is a subject that the Japanese have studied for thousands of years, while we Chinese people are blindly opposed to and refused to do the research work, and even almost reluctant to look at the Japanese writing, and not willing to see the Japanese or listen to them talk, so this can be called a ‘closed mindset’ and ‘an intellectual Boxers’ movement’.”<sup>8</sup>

China’s weakness in the study of neighboring countries derives from its own complex background and reasons. This paper considers the changes in the education curriculum for Asian history in the History Department of Beijing University and other universities, and analyzes the attitude of Chinese universities towards history education regarding China’s neighboring countries.

## II. Oriental History: Divide a World into Three Parts Without Success

Chinese universities did not arrive late to world history education. In 1898, the “Capital Big School Charter” proposed by Liang Qichao set the “History of China and Foreign Countries” as one of the basic courses. In 1902, Zhang Baixi presided over formulating the “Authorized Capital Big School Charter” and “Authorized Capital Higher School Charter,” both of which “Chinese and foreign histories” replaced the “History of China and Foreign Countries,”<sup>9</sup> dividing foreign history into early, middle, and modern periods.<sup>10</sup> Of course, foreign history here mainly

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<sup>7</sup> Wang Tongnian, *New Oriental History*, 4, Beijing: The Commercial Press, 1924.

<sup>8</sup> Dai Jitao, *On Japan*, 3, Shanghai: Mingzhi Bookstore, 1928.

<sup>9</sup> Shu Xinchun, *Materials for China Modern Education History*, vol.2, Beijing: People Education Press, 1961, pp.538–567.

<sup>10</sup> Regarding historical facts of historical department of Beijing University, please refer to: *The*

refers to Western history, with little mention of Asian history. For example, in 1902 the examination questions of the capital big school not only included questions about topics on Islam, but also questions comparing Western and Asian history.<sup>11</sup> In January 1904, Zhang Zhidong and Zhang Baixi divided history into Chinese history, the history of Asian countries, and the history of Western countries, in “Higher School Constitution to Be Presented to Qing Emperor.”<sup>12</sup> These scholars planned to set up a historiography of foreign countries corresponding to Chinese historiography, including a course entitled “World History” as one of the supplementary courses for students majoring in Chinese historiography and literature in those universities devoted to classics and liberal arts. They listed “History of Western Countries and History of Asian Countries” as two main courses for students majoring in Foreign Historiography at the liberal arts university.<sup>13</sup> At that time, the understanding to the concept of foreign historiography was almost the same as that of the concept of World History; and foreign historiography was the term generally used by those Japanese professors such as Unokichi who were invited to teach in the capital big school. Professor Unokichi stressed that “foreign historiography was not the history of some one country but it should be the history of relationships among

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*Brief History of Historical Department of Beijing University (first draft)*, edited by Guo Weidong and Niu Dayong in September of 2004.

<sup>11</sup> The question is “Historians say the country with great civilization is the one with long coastline and convenient river transportation, which could be testified in both ancient Greece and Roman and modern England. But why the coastal countries of Asian, Singapore islands and Korea cannot be developed with their transportation. Is the precedent wrong or is there other reason?” (*Historical Materials of Beijing University*, edited by Wang Xuezheng and Guo Jianrong, vol.1, Beijing University Press, 1993, pp.266–267).

<sup>12</sup> Shu Xinchun, *Materials for China Modern Education History*, vol.2, Beijing: People Education Press, 1961, pp.538–567.

<sup>13</sup> Shu Xinchun, “The Chapter of Zouding College,” *Materials for China Modern Education History*, vol.2, Beijing: People Education Press, 1961, pp.578–598. *Historical Materials of Beijing University*, edited by Wang Xuezheng and Guo Jianrong, vol.1, Beijing University Press, 1993, p.103.

different countries,”<sup>14</sup> which particularly emphasized the integrity of world history.

Textbooks of history used in this period by the capital big school have also come from Oriental textbook compilers, e.g., the “Ordinary New History” translated and published by the Shanghai Ordinary Book Room derived from the “Oriental History” compiled by the Japanese Middle School Pedagogy Research Institute.<sup>15</sup> The book “A Brief Introduction to Oriental History” written by Japanese Kuwabara Shezuan was translated by Fan Bingqing into Chinese and published by the Shanghai East Literature Press. Jin Weizhong re-examined and checked the translation of this book before its publication by the Commercial Press as a school textbook in the Republic of China. Thus, the introduction of Japanese historiography certainly influenced the development of Chinese historiography and the formation of its internal structure of division.<sup>16</sup>

In this way, at least in the school curriculum plan of the capital big school, not only the name of “world history” appeared, but the division between “History of Western Countries” and “History of Oriental Countries” also emerged. However, at that time conditions did not permit the capital big schools to form a division of the university, so they only opened preparatory branches, intensive branches and normal branches, where Jiang Shaogao (Kang Hu) and a Japanese named Sakamoto taught world history courses. Sakamoto’s system of World History greatly

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<sup>14</sup> Fubuyuzhiji, *The Lectures on Countries in Jingshi College, the Original and Second-Revised Lectures in Jingshi College*, stored in Beijing University Library.

<sup>15</sup> The book is entitled “Oriental History”: “Although the oriental history concerns about half of the East Continent Countries, in fact it revolves around our country (China) and treats others as subordinates,” (*The Revised and Enlarged New Common History*, compiled by Putong Book Chamber and revised by Zhou Peng, 1, The Commercial Press, 1913).

<sup>16</sup> Regarding the Japan historiography and its propagation in East Asian, please refer to: Bai, Yongrui. “The Birth and Decline of Oriental Historiography ... the Propagation and deformation of Academic Systems in East Asian,” *Taiwan Sociology Seasonal Journal*, no.59, 2005.

influenced Chinese scholars who later compiled world history textbooks. In 1910, the capital big school formally established a faculty university, but only offered the “Introduction to the History of China” as planned in the January 1904 charter, without offering the “History of Foreign Countries.”

In October 1912, the first year of the Republic of China, the Ministry of Education announced the “Big School Order,” and in January 1913 the ministry issued “Big School Regulations” that divided the history course at the liberal arts university into “Chinese History and Oriental History” and “Western History,” while “Chinese History and Oriental History” courses included national history beyond the Great Wall, oriental history, and the history of the islands in Southeast Asia.<sup>17</sup> At this time, the capital big school changed its name to Beijing University, and to 1919 underwent restructuring in accordance with the “Big School Order” issued in 1912 and 1917. However, in October 1913 the history department ceased operations until it reemerged in the autumn of 1917. The *Revised Courses Overview for Bachelor Degree and Preparatory College Students* of Peking University divided history courses into common courses (compulsory), specialized courses (elective), and special lectures. In the common courses, the general history of China, the Orient and the West appeared, while in the specialized courses, the history of Asian countries, and geography and history courses of the Center Asia also emerged. In 1918, Qian Weiji gave lectures on “General Oriental History” at Peking University, while He Bingsong talked about “Western History,” which basically formed general Chinese history, general Western history and general Asian history. After the May 4th Movement, Chinese history in the liberal arts

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<sup>17</sup> “The College Syllabus Announced by Education Ministry,” *Materials for China Modern Education History*, vol.2, Beijing: People Education Press, 1961, p.654; “The College Syllabus Command Announced by Education Ministry,” *Collective Achieves of Republican China History*, vol.3, Suzhou: Jiangsu Ancient Book Press, 1991, p.118.

at Peking University became a history department directed by Kang Baozhong, and added a Western history course. As Zhu Xizhu said, national history changed into world history.<sup>18</sup> But Oriental history developed relatively slowly. At the time, Qian Weiji had already retired. From the May 4th Movement to the outbreak of the War of Resistance against Japan, as well as gradually adding such courses as related to the history of communications between Europe and Asia, the history of modern Japan, the history of Japan, the history of ancient India, the general history of India, Korean History, the history of communications between China and the west, Oriental history, and the history of Central Asia and Asian history. Between 1929 and 1931, only Wang Tongling taught the courses on Oriental history or general Oriental history.<sup>19</sup>

“New Edition of Oriental History” written by Wang Tongling as a middle-school textbook was probably the most systemic of the few general oriental history textbooks published in the early period of the Republic of China.<sup>20</sup> He divided the world history into Western history and Asian history. However, Asian history, according to Wang Tongling, is not the history of Asian countries or the history of the whole Asia, but the history of relations between Asian nations. He stressed that if we only paid attention to the internal affairs within these countries, but did not involve international relations, it can only be regarded as a national

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<sup>18</sup> Zhu Xizu, “The Brief History and Future Hope of Historiography Department of Beijing University,” *The Thirty-One Anniversary Issue for National Beijing University*, edited by Propagation Committee for the thirty-one anniversary of Beijing University, 1929, p.70,

<sup>19</sup> Regarding the course statistics of historiography department of Beijing University in this period, please refer to: *The Brief History of Historical Department of Beijing University (first draft)*, edited by Guo Weidong and Niu Dayong in September of 2004, pp.34~40.

<sup>20</sup> Except *New Oriental History* by Wang Tongnian, the others that could be found and concerned about oriental history include: *Lectures on Oriental and Occidental History* edited by Fu Yunsen for Normal Training Club (The Commercial Press, 1912), *The Medium Historical Textbook on Orient and Occident* compiled by Zhao Yinian (Compiling Section of Shanghai Science Society, 1913), *ABC to Oriental and Occidental History* by Fu Yanchang (World Book Bureau, 1928), *Contemporary Oriental Political History* by Zhang Zhonghe (Culture Club, 1934), and *Oriental History* edited by Zhang Fuli (World Book Bureau, 1935), and so on.

history, not a history of countries or world history: history refers to the study of the relations between countries in the world, which is similar to Hattori Unokichi's view.<sup>21</sup> Meanwhile, he also pointed out that the world history by Lesaka and that the history of modern Europe by Matsumura Kaiseiki all belonged to the history of countries, and the history textbooks published in China should not be influenced by Lesaka and Matsumura.

Specifically, the history of relations between the Asian nations from the point view of Wang Tongling is actually the history of relations between China and other Asian countries. He stressed that China should be the center of Oriental history, and that Chinese history is the basis of Oriental history, and that Oriental history should mainly lie in Han nationality with Mongolia, Tibet, Korea, Japan, Annam, Siam, Burma, India, the Central Asian nations as subsidiaries.<sup>22</sup> Therefore, this Asian history can only be regarded as the minor subject of the Chinese history. All the countries related with China are all attachments.<sup>23</sup> From Wang Tongling's view appears the shadow of China's official history, which is similar to the "Oriental History" written by the Japan Higher School Pedagogy Institute. Meanwhile, he also stressed that world history is not the combination of all the ethnics in the east and west. Viewed as the history of state-to-state relations in the world, countries in the east and west have extremely little contacts with each other. Hence, Oriental history should exist as an independent field. From the perspective of China, China has close ties with its neighboring peoples. In the early period of the Republic of China when Nian Jinwei re-examined and checked the translation of "A Brief Introduction to Oriental History" written by Fan Bingqing, he showed his disagreement with Fan Bingqing

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<sup>21</sup> Wang Tongnian, *New Oriental History*, 4, Beijing: The Commercial Press, 1924.

<sup>22</sup> Wang Tongnian, *New Oriental History*, 3, Beijing: The Commercial Press, 1924.

<sup>23</sup> Wang Tongnian, *New Oriental History*, 4, Beijing: The Commercial Press, 1924.

who believed that although the oriental countries belonged to the same historical system, they had few connections with each other, and he believed that they had a mutual connection. Therefore, he provided a detailed supplement to ties between more than two countries.<sup>24</sup>

Attaching importance to the social function of the modern history also has a certain impact. After the founding of the Republic of China, Zhou Peng again revised the “Common New History” which the common study book store compiled according to the Japanese textbook. “Owing to the development of world transportation faster in recent years than before, our people have gradually communicated with the developing world and recognized that the selection of superior states and the elimination of inferior states would take one or two hundred years, which is a short period in the context of thousands of years. We should notice the developments of civilizations and the abilities of various nationalities...”<sup>25</sup> Japanese educators aimed to reinvigorate young people by editing this book. Chinese educators should also notice this purpose. While Jin Wei translated and edited “the History of Asia” written by Sanyuanzhizang, he wrote in the notes that “we should develop the national cultural quintessence and encourage people’s spirit and give up internal conflict, insult, superstition, spirit weariness and so on.”<sup>26</sup> His aim was very evident. Wang Tongling also criticized that Chinese constitutional reform should imitate those of the Western world. In the meantime, he criticized that many people had learnt more western world histories and known little about our four neighboring countries. Therefore, he pointed out that it was very necessary to study Asia

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<sup>24</sup> Sanyuanzhizang, *Outline of Oriental History* (the Sixth Edition), translated by Jin Wei, 1-2. Beijing: The Commercial Press, 1913.

<sup>25</sup> *The Revised and Enlarged New Common History*, compiled by Putong Book Chamber and revised by Zhou Peng, 1, Beijing: The Commercial Press, 1913.

<sup>26</sup> Sanyuanzhizang, *Outline of Oriental History* (the Sixth Edition), translated by Jin Wei, 3, Beijing: The Commercial Press, 1913.

history.<sup>27</sup> Before the anti-Japanese war, Guo Bingjia once taught “the Modern Far-east History” and of he wrote in the course introduction that “this course describes the history of far-eastern development in the past one hundred and fifty years in order to present modern China’s position, the causes of competition in East Asia by various world countries, our current problems and the evolutionary trend in the Far East.”<sup>28</sup>

Zhu Xizu,<sup>29</sup> who became the head of the Peking University history department in December 1919, once hoped to make a comprehensive study of world history that would present historical concepts systematically related to all human development as a means of cultivating some students for a role as historical researchers.<sup>30</sup> On the other hand, before 1949, Peking University offered two specialized basic courses in the history department: Chinese History and Western World History. Western World History was taught as a few separate historical periods in the way Chinese History was taught as a few dynastic histories before 1947. Western World General History as a systematic two-year course came into being after 1947 with four teaching sections up to medieval history, but lacking a systematic presentation of modern and current world history, whereas, The History of the French Revolution, and 19<sup>th</sup>-Century Western History covered the Modern History of the Western World. In 1949, the history department, Peking University listed the Modern History of the Western World as one required course for students in grades one and two. During the first year of teaching, because

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<sup>27</sup> Wang Tongnian, *New Oriental History*, 4, Beijing: The Commercial Press, 1924.

<sup>28</sup> *A Glimpse to National Wuhan University: Twenty-Four Years in Republican China*, edited by National Wuhan University, 38, Wuhan, National Wuhan University, 1935.

<sup>29</sup> Zhu Xizu, the dean of Historiography Department of Beijing University from December of 1919 to the autumn of 1927, and from the spring of 1929 to the end of 1930.

<sup>30</sup> Zhu Xizu, “Prelude to New Historiography,” *New Historiography*, edited by Lu Bingsun and translated by He Bingsong, Beijing: The Commercial Press, 1929, pp.1~2; *The Guideline to Historiography Courses* (the 19<sup>th</sup> -20<sup>th</sup> year), Beijing University Archives, vol.15, no.1919029. *The Guideline to Historiography Courses* (the 13<sup>th</sup> -14<sup>th</sup> year), Beijing University Daily, 1930.

of the heavy burden for students, the course became a required course for in grades two and three after 1950. In 1950, the Peking University history department set up teaching groups in Chinese History, Modern Chinese History and Western World History.

History departments in other universities carried out teaching activities similar to those of the Peking University history department. Only a few professors taught Asian History without a systematic basic course in the General History of Asia. For example, no course related to histories of Asian countries in the Wuhan University history department until 1932,<sup>31</sup> with Modern Far-east History subsequently taught by Professor Guo Bingjia, and Indian History and Japanese History taught by Professor Chen Gonglu. Professor Chen Gonglu wrote the Indian General History Outline in the 1934 introduction material.<sup>32</sup> Professor Wang Yisun subsequently taught Japanese History.<sup>33</sup> Because Professor Guo Binjia was a scholar majoring in Western World History and Professor Chen Gonglu was a scholar majoring in Chinese History, these courses could not be taught by them on a regular basis.<sup>34</sup> In the Yanching University history department Hong Ye once taught Far-east History in English, and his main teaching content included modern Chinese history involving Britain since the Opium War, called the History of Modern

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<sup>31</sup> “Rough Introduction and Guideline to Courses of All Colleges,” *A Glimpse to National Wuhan University*, edited by National Wuhan University, Wuhan: National Wuhan University, 1933, pp.43-47.

<sup>32</sup> “Rough Introduction and Guideline to Courses of All Colleges.” *A Glimpse to National Wuhan University*, edited by National Wuhan University, Wuhan: National Wuhan University, January, 1933, p.23, p.43.

<sup>33</sup> “Rough Introduction and Guideline to Courses of All Colleges,” *A Glimpse to National Wuhan University*, edited by National Wuhan University, 36, Wuhan: National Wuhan University, 1933 edited by National Wuhan University, 28, Wuhan: National Wuhan University, 1934.

<sup>34</sup> *A Glimpse to National Wuhan University*, the course introduction has the clear statement that Indian History will not be set as course (“Rough Introduction and Guideline to Courses of All Colleges,” *A Glimpse to National Wuhan University*, edited by National Wuhan University, 36, Wuhan: National Wuhan University, 1933 edited by National Wuhan University, 28, Wuhan: National Wuhan University, December, 1934).

Relations between China and Britain. Wen Dujian in the Peking University history department taught a thorough comparative History of Asia. Oriental History and the History of China & Western World Traffic were taught for students in grade four of the Furen University history department.<sup>35</sup> In addition, ang Hao once taught South Asian History, including the History of Viet Nam, Thailand and Burma in Southeast Asia, and the History of India in South Asia.<sup>36</sup> On the eve of liberation, Professor Zhou Yiliang, an expert majoring in the history of the Wei, Jin, the South and North dynasties, who taught Japanese in the Tsinghua University foreign languages department, once taught Japanese History as a part-time professor.<sup>37</sup>

In 1930, the National Central University history department divided the curriculum schedules into four types: National History, Western World History and Eastern World History, a General Survey and a Research Class. Although the general history course could not be set up as Eastern World History like National History and Western World History, it also consisted of Japanese History, Japanese Pre-Modern History, Korean History, Indian History, History of Southeast Asian countries, History of Northern Asia, History of Islamic countries and History of Europe-Asia transaction.<sup>38</sup> According to “the Overview of National Central University” printed in 1944, besides the annual compulsory courses in Chinese General History, Western World History, Chinese Pre-Modern History and Western World Pre-Modern History, various professors taught courses much the same. Although a specialist in Western World History, as a department head at National Central

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<sup>35</sup> “Curriculum Timetable of All Colleges,” *Furen University*, edited in June of the 19<sup>th</sup> year of Republican China.

<sup>36</sup> “Explanation for Undergraduate Courses... Historiography Department,” *A Glimpse to Private Beijing Furen University*, 60, the 36<sup>th</sup> year of Republican China.

<sup>37</sup> Zhou Yiliang, *True Student*, Beijing October Art Press, 1998, p.45.

<sup>38</sup> “Curriculum and its Illustration... Course Timetable of Historiography Department,” *Rough Introduction to Literature College of A Glimpse to National China Central University*, 1930, p.49.

University, Sheng Bogang also taught Indian History. In addition, Zhu Yanfeng specialized in Central Asian History and Nai Zijia specialized in Islamic National History. Maybe because Sheng Bogang, who could teach Eastern history, was a professor in Western World History, at National Central University Eastern World History was attached to Western World History. As for Western World Periodic History, there was Asia-Africa Ancient National History. There were Turkic history and Islamic history in the specialized history studies.<sup>39</sup>

High school history education presented the same story. Yang Renbian mentioned in the history textbook *Foreign History for High School Students* that foreign history differed from world history: “In foreign history, European history is the center of course... because Europe holds a more significant position; what’s more, changes in Europe are more important.”<sup>40</sup> The Foreign History text edited by his contemporary He Bingsong differed slightly from that view. While narrating ancient history, he spared special chapters for the history of India, Southeast Asia, North Korea, Japan, and other Asian nations. He Bingsong did so because he was not happy with the fact that “the commonly so-called foreign history or world history is, in most cases, an expanded Western history centered on Europe.” As far as he was concerned, Europe stood undoubtedly at the center of modern world culture, and thus deserved special attention. China and other Asian nations did make great contributions to world culture in medieval and ancient times. As a result, we should no more hold the out-dated opinion that “all Han tribes should be treated as one family while all foreign savages are outsiders”; neither should we echo the prejudice of European historians, neglecting the cultural contribution of Asian nations other

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<sup>39</sup> *Rough Introduction to National China Central University: the 29<sup>th</sup> University Anniversary*, edited by Art Section of the 34<sup>th</sup> Student Autonomous Society, Student Autonomous Society of National China Central University, 1944, pp.40–41.

<sup>40</sup> Yang Rengeng, *Advanced and Medium Foreign History*, vol.1, 4. Beixin Book Bureau, 1931.

than China because they had declined for a long time. Especially, “with regard to the origin of ancient culture and the spread and development of medieval culture, Asian nations’ made contributions in no way inferior to those of Europe.” As a result, the history of Asian nations since from ancient times to the 15<sup>th</sup> Century may be depicted in a more detailed manner.<sup>41</sup>

### III. The History of Asian Countries: Resumption of Power

The establishment of new China in 1949 represents not only a political event, but also a profound change in academic ideas, methods and institutions. After the liberation of Beijing (then Peiping) in the spring of 1949, all history departments of universities in Peiping, including Peking University, started discussions about reformation in educational and the university curriculum. The History Departments of Peking University, Nanking University, Tsinghua University, Peking Normal University, Catholic Peking University, Sino-French University, and the Historiography Research Organizations at Peiping Research Institute and North China University sent delegates to attend the symposia held in Peking University on May 15<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>. After the symposia, they decided to establish the Peking New Historiography Research Association. As for historiography’s new change as pursued by the Peking New Historiography Research Association ever since its foundation, it can probably be summarized using Guo Moruo’s words. On July 28, 1951, Guo Moruo spoke at the opening session of the Association of Chinese Historians. He said that Chinese historiography had achieved six turning points, including the conversion from Occidental centralism to the focus on the history of Asia and other continents.<sup>42</sup> In 1954 Guo Moruo wrote a

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<sup>41</sup> He Bingsong, *Foreign History*, The Commercial Press, 1934, pp.3-5.

foreword for the magazine “History Research” entitled “Start research in history, reach the climax in cultural construction.” This foreword pointed out the direction for the future development of historiography. Besides, it also presented the idea that the historiography of Chinese minorities and the different nationalities of Asia, and even world history, needed research and explanation from a scientific viewpoint.

Regarding university education in historiography, on September 14, 1949, the Historiography Department in Peking University held a symposium for all the students and teachers, discussing such matters as teaching and opening courses. At the end of the symposium, all the courses in that year were set. Besides adding courses like the historiography of social development, Contemporary Chinese History, and selected readings in the history of Marxism-Leninism, the symposium also added the historiography of Asian countries. After the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950, Korean issues incurred much attention. On October 25, 1950, students and teachers from the Historiography Department of Peking University held a symposium, focusing on Korean issues. Influenced by the change of situation, on November 8, 1950, the Historiography Department in Peking University decided to compile “The Historiography of Good Sino-Korean Relations” and “The Historiography of the American Invasion of China.” On November 24, the Historiography Department of Peking University invited Zhou Yiliang to talk about “Relations between China and Korea.”

Soon after that, Peking University undertook an adjustment of colleges in 1952. After the adjustment, universities and advanced normal colleges which did not have history departments before now carried out comprehensive reforms, mainly to learn from the Soviet Union. At that time, many universities set their majors, teaching plans and teaching organizations according to the pattern of Moscow University in the

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<sup>42</sup> Guo Moruo, “The New Era of Chinese Historiography,” *Progress Daily*, September 29, 1951.

Soviet Union. As for the history department of different universities, they built up the historiography major, and also established specialized teaching and researching sections for this subject, also following the example of the History Department of Moscow University. After the October Revolution, the Soviet Union also began to attach more importance to research on the historiography of Asian countries where it sought to import revolution into countries and regions. The Russian Academy of Sciences and The Republic of Uzbekistan both maintained Asian research institutes. Moreover, the Russian institutions already published several magazines related to Asian studies. Compared with China, Soviet Russia supported more advanced research on Asian countries. the most important part that As a result, history departments in every Chinese university learnt the most from the advanced educational system and the educational experience of the Soviet Union.

At that time, the History Department of Nanking University had only one major of historiography, which was divided into two majors of Chinese history and World History. On October 3, 1954, each major is divided into two sections of Teaching and Research. In 1955, these four teaching and research groups, focused respectively on the history of ancient and medieval China, modern and contemporary Chinese history, ancient and medieval world history, modern and contemporary world history. In 1956, the History Department in Nanjing University drew up a plan for the next 12 years, making Asian history one of four planned research directions. However, in the second half of 1956, the historiography department decided to cancel three courses – “Asian History,” “Logics,” and “Pedagogy” to reduce the workload of the students.<sup>43</sup> Therefore, at least till 1957, the Nanjing University history department had not established a specialized teaching and research

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<sup>43</sup> Zhou Yiliang, “The Prelude,” *The Ancient Histories of Asian Countries*, vol.1. Beijing: Higher Education Press, 1958.

section for Asian history. On October 7, 1957, the department passed the "History Department Work Outline for the first semester, 1958-1959." According to the regulation on teacher education, assistant professors who taught world history, including Asian history, should comprehend one foreign language. Asian history was not listed as a separate category, but was included in World History. At that time, the Nanjing University History Department probably had only two teachers concerned with Asian History - Miu Fenglin and Liu Jixuan.

Following the reorganization of colleges and departments, the Peking University History Department began to implement a new teaching plan. The department persuaded Zhou Yiliang to set up teaching and research sections on Asian History since he knew several foreign languages, including Japanese, and because he had experience teaching Japanese History. Under Zhou Yiliang, the course on Asian History immediately opened. During the first semester of 1952-1953, Zhou Yiliang set up a selective course of Asian history for juniors and seniors in the history department, and continued this course for seniors in the second semester. From the second semester of 1953-1954, Asian history became a compulsory course for juniors and seniors. In the second semester of 1955-1956, Asian history changed to the History of Asian Countries, and divided into ancient, modern, and contemporary Asian history. The History of Asian countries became a basic specialized course, along with the History of China and World History. Students were required to take the History of Asian Countries in their second and third years. In 1953, the Peking University history department stipulated that for new students starting that year, all history and archaeology majors should enter five-year program with specialized courses starting from the third year. The draft "Teaching Plan for History Department Majors in 1953" established a specialization in the History of Asian Countries other than China and Soviet Russia. Moreover, the "Illustration for the Teaching Plan of History in Comprehensive Universities," also required specialization in the Histories of Asian Countries.

Although the History of Asian Countries had been set up as a basic specialized course, it did not start from Ancient history as Chinese history and World history, but due to certain limitations restricted its content to only modern and contemporary segments. First, people at that time considered modern and contemporary history most important. Second, teaching outlines, textbooks, or experts' lecture notes in modern and contemporary history were available for reference by teachers and students. In the spring of 1965, courses opened for the first time in the ancient and modern History of Asian Countries, with Zhou Yiliang as its teacher. At that time, Zhou Yiliang consulted syllabus drafts concerning the history of Asian countries drawn up by the Zhongshan University history department. When the course opened for the second time in the spring of 1957, Zhou Yiliang collected and arranged students' notes from the previous semester. Moreover, according to the syllabus of Asian Countries' History revised by the Ministry of Higher Education, he combined ancient and medieval histories together, supplementing and revising them, before printing and issuing them as lecture notes. At that time, the Higher Education Press suggested formally publishing the lecture notes, but Zhou Yiliang refused. In the winter of 1957, the Higher Education Press again requested that Zhou Yiliang publish them, and Zhou Yiliang agreed at last. In February 1958, the Higher Education Press published "The Ancient Histories of Asian Countries" compiled by Zhou Yiliang.<sup>44</sup> In 1957 and 1958, the press also published the "Outline of Ancient Histories of Asian Countries" by Wang Jiwu, and "Lecture Notes on the Modern History of Asian Countries" by He Zhaofa. Afterwards He Zhaofa revised the textbook compiled by himself, and added the content of 1955-1958 which was written by Liu Yuzun. He finished revising the manuscript at the end of 1959, but remained unable

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<sup>44</sup> He Zhaofa and Liu Yuzun, "The Prelude," *Lectures on Modern Histories of Asian Countries* (the Revised and Enlarged Edition), Xiamen: Xiamen University, 1962.

to get it published. In the spring of 1962, The History Department of Xiamen University invited He Zhaochun to give lectures on the contemporary history of Asian countries. Due to the demand for teaching, the History Department in Xiamen University printed 600 copies in June 1962, so as to provide reference for related teaching and research sections in different colleges and universities. Textbooks of Asian history also included “Histories of Asian Countries” by Zhu Jieqin, and “Lecture Notes for the Contemporary History of Asian Countries” by Wang Qiming and Zhu Shouren. In the spring of 1957, the Higher Education Ministry entrusted Zhongshan University and Peking University to draw up a syllabus for the histories of Asian countries, while at the same time it also organized people to collectively compile textbooks of Asian History.

In the historiographical revolution of 1958, the so-called bourgeois academic ideas presented in such books as “Outline for the History of Asian Countries,” “Lecture Notes on Modern Histories of Asian Countries,” “Histories of Asian Countries,” and “Lecture Notes on World Medieval History” became the target of criticism in the field of world history. Still, Asian and African history became highly valued once again. Not only the Chinese Academy of Sciences set up an Afro-Asian research institute, but teachers and students in higher education institutions also cooperated with the Chinese Academy of Sciences and related personnel during the teaching revolution. Textbooks that claimed direction by Mao Zedong Thought were successively compiled on modern world history and the history of Asian countries, but due to their low academic level these textbooks were suspended during the improvement and rectification of Higher Education Institutions. In April 1961, the Central Propaganda Department of the Chinese Communist Party organized a conference about the compilation of literary textbooks, presenting the idea that China should break away from textbooks of the Soviet Union and western countries so as to make textbooks of its own. The conference decided that Zhou Yiliang and Wu Yuyu should compile a textbook on

“World History” and a “Reference for World History” published in 1982 by People’s Press. It did not present the plan for compiling the textbook “The Ancient Histories of Asian Countries,” probably because of the tendency at that time for Asian countries to return to the category of world history.

#### **IV. The History of Asia: The Handicap in Founding a System of Academic Disciplines**

After liberation, the Soviet Union naturally became an example for new China to establish the socialist university. Some of the historians with quick ideological reaction tended to learn from the Soviet Union very early at that time. On March 10, 1950, Xiang Da, Zhu Qingyong, Yang Renpian greeted and met with the Soviet Union historian and archeologist Ghisje-Lev in Beijing. In 1952, after the structural adjustment of the colleges and departments, the advanced education system and experience of the Soviet Union gained more and more importance. However, the discipline cannot be copied totally; it should be adopted by teachers in steps. In April and May, 1954, all the world history teachers in the History Department of Peking University held a symposium to adopt the experience of study from the Soviet Union. The members in the meeting put forward a three-phase program of conversion. In the first phase, they found that history teaching materials from the Soviet Union offered nothing great. In the second phase after the 3 Anti-Movements and the Land Reform, the advantages of the history-teaching materials of Soviet Union came to be accepted. Then in the third phase, teachers earnestly learned and put into practice the Soviet teaching materials for history.<sup>45</sup> Then and there, the so-called learning

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<sup>45</sup>Zhang Guangda, *The Meeting of Teaching and Searching Section, Free Talk about Reflection on Learning Soviet Union*, vol.9, contents no.13, case no.6. Beijing Achieves, 1954. Zhang Guangda, *The Meeting of Teaching and Searching Section: Free Talk about Reflection on*

from the advanced experience of Soviet historiography mainly consisted of studying Soviet teaching materials, as well as Soviet teaching methods. Yang Renpian and other specialists even emphasized this study of the Soviet teaching materials. Yang Renpian himself even translated *The General History of the Soviet Union and The History of the Soviet Communist Party*. He also said that after three readings of the latter he finally came to know that the last few chapters in this book closely related to the General Line. Therefore, he also realized why Chairman Mao stressed learning from the Soviet Union.<sup>46</sup> As for the history of Asia, *The History of the Ancient World* by Мищулин, А. В.,<sup>47</sup> and *Ancient Eastern Society* by В. В. Струве appeared early in 1948 by the Shanghai Kaiming Bookstore and Dafu Publishing Corporation. In the same period, translations of *The History of the Ancient East*, *The Modern History of Eastern Countries* also appeared in print.

Learning from the Soviet Union sought to make history serve reality and the class struggle. Specifically, for the field of the history of Asia, that meant to follow the pattern of what Soviet specialists thought about the character and social structure of the ancient east. So, Chinese scholars viewed the confirmation of the social nature of history as one of the Soviet Unions the superior achievements in historical science. In July 1956, the teaching outline of the history of Asian countries examined and revised by the Higher Education Ministry also referred to related Soviet teaching outlines, such as *The Outline of Ancient World History* edited by the History Research Institute of the Soviet Union Academy of Sciences, *The Teaching Outline of Indian History* issued by the Soviet Union's Higher Education Ministry in 1950, *The Teaching Outline of the History*

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*Learning Soviet Union*, vol.9, contents no.13, case no.19, Beijing Achieves, 1954.

<sup>46</sup> Zhang Guangda, *The Meeting of Teaching and Searching Section: Free Talk about Reflection on Learning Soviet Union*, vol.9, contents no.13, case no.6. Beijing Achieves, 1954.

<sup>47</sup> А. В. Мищулин, *The Ancient World History*, translated by Wang Yijin, Shanghai, Kaiming Bookstore, 1948. republished by Beijing: China Youth Press, 1954.

of *Eastern Countries* approved in 1949, and some other books. Questions and solutions put forward mainly followed the Soviet teaching materials. Especially with regard to social problems, scholars mainly copied the conclusions of the Soviet Union. However, some parts of modern history necessarily modified some problems according to the spirit of the 20th National Congress of the Soviet Communist Party (SCP).<sup>48</sup>

However, Soviet historical research on the east also focused on the Soviet Union and served Soviet needs. So in the process of learning from Soviet history, such a mode of historical depiction also became target of study. When summarizing the experience of studying Soviet history, Qi Sihe emphasized that in editing our own history textbooks we should stress the position of China in world history.<sup>49</sup> He pointed out that the Soviet outline of history aimed to demonstrate the contributions of the Soviet Union and the Russian people while exposing how the bourgeoisie fabricated a Slavonic history.<sup>50</sup> Thus, emphasizing the relationship between China and Asian countries to give prominence to the position of China in world history became one of the basic tenets of history education in Asian countries. In 1954, the Higher Education Ministry formulated the teaching plan for the general university history major, emphasizing that at that time Asian people had become the great power against imperialism. Chinese people had a close relationship with all the other Asian countries, and would subsequently grow in importance. As a result, the ministry argued, students need to learn more about the history of Asian countries.<sup>51</sup> Contemporary research on Asian

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<sup>48</sup> *Syllabus of Asian Countries' History* (for the 4-year or 5-year term History major in Comprehensive University), revised by Higher Education Ministry of People's Republic of China, Beijing: Higher Education Press, 1956, pp.4~5, p.20.

<sup>49</sup> Zhang Guangda, *The Meeting of Teaching and Searching Section: Free Talk about Reflection on Learning Soviet Union*, vol.9, contents no.13, case no.6, Beijing Achieves, 1954.

<sup>50</sup> Zhang Guangda, *The Meeting of Teaching and Searching Section: Free Talk about Reflection on Learning Soviet Union*, vol.9, contents no.13, case no.19, Beijing Achieves, 1954.

<sup>51</sup> "Syllabus of Asian Countries' History (Ancient and Medieval Part) ... Illustration," *Syllabus*

history also reflected this tendency. For example, research tasks concentrated on political topics such as imperialist aggression into Asia, modern and current Asian national independence movements, and their relations with China. Ding Zemin once released a paper called *The Three Peaks of Modern Asian National Independence Movement and China in the forth issue of History Research*. The paper also reflected the basic point of view of Chinese research on Asian history in that period.

Furthermore, China also tried to constitute courses that covered the history of all Asian countries, but then the fact remained that almost no talent existed with knowledge about the history of Western Asia. In July 1956, the Higher Education Ministry held a conference on teaching literary history and the university outline examination which approved the history teaching outline of Asian countries consigned by the Higher Education Ministry as drafted by Zhou Yiliang of Peking University history department, and Zhu Jieqin the Zhongshan University history department. Although this outline targeted the history of all Asian countries, due to the severe shortage of specialists in the field of Asian history at that time, teaching only included the history of India and the countries in east of India, temporarily leaving out Afghanistan, Iran, Turkey and other countries in West Asia. If conditions allowed, the university could also teach the history of West Asia with the consent of the Teaching and Research Group. It was hoped that after 1958 the other universities could also teach the history of West Asia.<sup>52</sup> However, even for the history of South Asian, Southeast Asian and the East Asian countries, not all the universities had capable teachers to lectures. Thus, the outline gave priority to teaching the history of India, Korea, Japan,

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*of Asian Countries' History* (for the 4-year or 5-year term History major in Comprehensive University), revised by Higher Education Ministry of People's Republican of China, Beijing: Higher Education Press, 1956, p.4.

<sup>52</sup> *Syllabus of Asian Countries' History* (for the 4-year or 5-year term History major in Comprehensive University), revised by Higher Education Ministry of People's Republican of China, Beijing: Higher Education Press, 1956, p.21.

Vietnam, Thailand, Burma, Kampuchea, Laos, Indonesia and Malaya. Moreover, this outline did not even include the parts of Central Asia and Siberia in the Soviet Union at that time. Therefore the history of Asian countries only actually included the history of countries peripheral to China beyond the Soviet Union, and embodied countries in the orbits of China and the Soviet Union.

It could not cover the whole Asia geographically and even the countries inside the orbit could not be all included. However, it emphasized the organic wholeness of Asian History rather than presenting just a patchwork of histories of individual countries. It wanted to establish the history science system of all the Asian countries.<sup>53</sup>

What constituted the organic wholeness of Asian history? Zhou Yiliang pointed out that the history of all Asian countries shared three aspects. First, the long history and great culture should be emphasized in the Asian History courses. Second, scholars should research the stories, experiences, strategies, and functions of all the Asian countries, as well as the political and economical achievement gained after independence. Third, scholars should summarize the friendly relations between China and Asian countries over hundreds of years. All three aspects were related with China.

The first aspect emphasized was the influence of Chinese culture on the history and culture of other East Asian countries. So the emphasis on the social development of all the Asian countries, the external cause occupied an important position because in some Asian countries such as Korea, Japan, and Vietnam, Chinese cultural and technological influence could be seen in the process of social development the primitive commune to the feudalist system. The teaching outline required this emphasis on the Chinese role in social development, as well as on the

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<sup>53</sup> *Syllabus of Asian Countries' History* (for the 4-year or 5-year term History major in Comprehensive University), revised by Higher Education Ministry of People's Republic of China, Beijing: Higher Education Press, 1956, pp.5-6.

relationship between feudalist systems in Southeast Asia, Japan, Korea and other countries, and the feudalist system of China, the friendship and cultural cooperation between Chinese people and other countries, especially the profound friendship formed in the process of struggle against invasion from the outside.

Next, the outline stressed that modern and contemporary Asian countries shared the same fate when exposed to enslavement and oppression by Western colonialists. They also influenced each other in the anti-colonial struggle and national independence movements, especially through mutual study and support after the October Revolution. This aspect attached importance to linkage with the Chinese revolution and the function of the Chinese revolutionary experience. Zhou Yiliang insisted: “The Chinese revolutionary experience over thirty years has realistic significance for the revolution of all the Asian countries. Following the liberation of China, we have taken more responsibilities in Asia.”<sup>54</sup>

In conclusion, Zhou pointed out that, although in the early ancient period Asian countries existed in a mutual state of almost total isolation, in medieval times they enjoyed frequent communication, and this contact grew closer in modern times. Especially in modern times, Asian countries developed in the same direction, that is to say, toward national liberation, socialism, and communism.<sup>55</sup> So the history of Asian countries should be seen as an organic whole, not just the patchwork of separate histories. This not only reflected the stress on China’s central position and function in Asian history, but also displayed the reality of the Cold War between the West and the East. Through emphasizing that Asian people always love freedom and peace, the consolidated

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<sup>54</sup> Zhou Yiliang, *The Ancient Histories of Asian Countries*, vol.1, Beijing: Higher Education Press, 1958, p.2.

<sup>55</sup> Zhou Yiliang, *The Ancient Histories of Asian Countries*, vol.1, Beijing: Higher Education Press, 1958, pp.4-5.

standpoint of Asian countries against the imperialism appears obvious.

To embody the wholeness of Asian history, teaching gave prominence to modern events, in the spirit of “little ancient history, more modern history.” The four-year teaching plan in 1955 included a total of 168 lesson hours in Asian history with 36 lesson hours on ancient and medieval times, and 132 lesson hours on modern and contemporary times, with the segments on ancient and medieval times and the one on modern and contemporary times available separately. As conditions allowed, the history of Asian countries could be opened first. The history of colonist invasion and anti-colonial struggle were central to the segments on modern and contemporary history. The first epoch in the history of Asian countries began with the invasion of the East by western capitalist powers. Then the Asian countries became colonies and semi-colonies as at the same time Asian peoples stood in defiance against the colonial powers. Therefore, the lectures should follow the sequence by which the Asian countries and the western powers became immersed in the swirl world history, mainly concerning India, Indonesia, Indochina, Japan and Korea. The second epoch of modern history marked the transition from capitalism to imperialism. The history of Japan should be presented first because Japan took a path different from other Asian countries, followed by the histories of Korea, Mongolia, Indochina, Burma, Thailand, Indonesia, Malaya, the Philippines, and India. Lectures on Burma, Thailand, Malaya and the Philippines were centralized in the second part of the outline.

The struggle of various Asian countries for national independence, peace, democracy, and socialism formed the main characteristic of contemporary history.. Therefore, lectures should first introduce some people’s democratic countries, such as Mongolia, North Korea, and Indochina. Then we can talk about the nationalism of countries such as India, Burma, and Indonesia, Japan, Thailand, Malaya, Philippines, and so on. As all contemporary history can be divided into two stages, so with the contemporary history of various Asian nations. The first part

concerns Mongolia, Japan, North Korea, Indochina, India and Indonesia, while the second part covers North Korea, Indochina, India, Pakistan, Burma, Indonesia, Japan, Thailand, Malaya and the Philippines. Since the content is limited, the histories of Burma, Thailand, Malaya, and the Philippines, merge with the second part.

This approach to history, taking China as the center, emphasizing the Chinese status and the relationship between China and the various Asian countries, perhaps partially conforms to historical fact. However, it also could result that the Asian history never forms a whole system, but rather a collectivity of various Asian national histories. From this perspective, China differs from Japan. An island country, Japan maintains weak relations with various Asian countries, therefore East Asian history could take Chinese history as its center. Not only the journal *Oriental History* edited by the Japanese Middle School Education Seminar could place Chinese history at its center. The main chapters of *East & Western History Textbook*, edited by Wu Baocheng at the end of Qing Dynasty, stressed national history and the relationships between China and foreign countries.<sup>56</sup> Wang Tongling's emphasis that *Oriental History* should focus on national history also stems from this kind of consideration. After all, Wang Tongling tends to emphasize the relations among countries, and he could get noting about various Asian nationalities' relations without Chinese history. However, Zhang Fubin and Fu Yanchang do not want to repeat Chinese history, so their works such as *Japanese History* and *The ABC of Japanese History* is just collect various Asian national histories. The *History of Various East Asian Nation's Teaching Materials* edited by Zhou Yiliang, He Zhaofa, Zhu Jieqin, Wang Jiwu, Wang Qimin, also give a similar impression. Perhaps because of this, their text refers to "various Asian national histories," but not to "Asian history." In brief, the

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<sup>56</sup> Wu Baochen, *Textbook on Oriental and Occidental History*, Shanghai: Shanghai Civilization Book Bureau, the 31<sup>st</sup> year of Guangxu Dynasty.

omission of Chinese history would not only present difficulties in illustrating relations between Chinese and various Asian countries, but also in presenting the various Asian national histories as a whole.<sup>57</sup>

At that time, the problem of presenting the history of various Asian countries not only appeared in the challenge of presenting Asian history as a whole, but also about how to divide various Asian national histories from world history. If we take various Asian national histories out of general world history, and open *Chinese general history*, *general world history* and the various national histories of Asia as three courses, we move towards the Japanese approach to history, for in Japan the courses are *Japanese history*, *Oriental History* and *Western history*. The difference is that at that time Chinese history education certainly was not willing to remove various Asian national histories from world history, but changed Western history and Oriental History. On the contrary, this choice, emphasized the integrity of various Asian national histories along with the integrity of world history. Chinese education considered world history as a whole, with the function of illustrating the development of humanity. Therefore, various Asian national histories remained components of world history. Thus, the big problem is how to avoid repetition and the omission of various Asian national histories and world history. We lack a uniform understanding. When various Asian national histories branch out, in order to keep a system, each part of world history would talk about East Asian countries without establishing the uniqueness of each national historical development. At schools with no history courses, the higher education ministry of requests educational research groups on world history to teach East-Asian and Southeast-Asian history under world history.

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<sup>57</sup> *Syllabuses of World and Asian Countries' Histories ... General Illustration In Syllabus of Asian Countries' History* (for the 4-year or 5-year term History major in Comprehensive University), revised by Higher Education Ministry of People's Republican of China, 1, Beijing: Higher Education Press, 1956.

Similarly, the various Asian nations cannot escape the influence of world history. First, when dividing the Asian History into periods, the periods in European History has been considered. The various Asian national histories still roughly deferred to the standard division of world history into stages from ancient times to the 17<sup>th</sup> century, with intermediate stages including the Middle Ages, and the modern era from the bourgeois revolution in 17<sup>th</sup>-century England to the October Revolution in Russia. Contemporary history began after the socialist revolution started in Russia's October Revolution. Contemporary history could be divided into two stages, as in *The instruction of various Asian national history programs* edited in February, 1956, which they considered the start of the World War II, and the general crisis of Capitalism as the boundary. However, examines the July subscribing meeting, they changed to take 1945 as the line. At that time experts considered that socialism became the universal system when the Second World War ended, and two parallel world markets formed; day by day imperialism and the colonial system disintegrated, further deepening the general crisis of Capitalism, therefore making 1945 more appropriately as the second boundary of contemporary history. At that time appearance of advanced production methods served as the the principle for designating the stages of world history. Thus, modern history began in 1642, and the fact that Asian countries had not by then entered the capitalist stage did not prevent the use of this date as an historical watershed. Similarly, although various Asian countries had not established socialist power by 1917, the October Revolution of Russia served as the beginning of contemporary history.<sup>58</sup>

At that time, besides disfiguring the history of various Asian countries under this system, the shortage of eligible teachers presented

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<sup>58</sup> Zhou Yiliang, *The Ancient Histories of Asian Countries*, vol.1, Beijing: Higher Education Press, 1958, p.5.

the main obstacle to developing Asian history as a discipline. China had no no foundation for teaching Asian history. After the liberation, the earliest Asian history teachers had to change occupations. Although Peking University had the most strength in this research field, it also lacked faculty. Although Zhou Yiliang became responsible for the Asian history faculty, he simultaneously held the position of assistant director of history, and became busy with administrative duties, probably spending only half or a third of his in teaching. Zhou Yiliang asked Xu Shiqian to join the Asian history faculty working office, but as the professional general secretary of the main party branch Xu Shiqian was also always busy. For the basic courses in the various national histories of Asian countries, Li Kezhen was tired of teaching the course of History of Asian Countries, and Li Kaiwu only received appointment to the Peking University history department in 1958.<sup>59</sup>

Even in the History Department of Peking University, it was difficult to find a qualified teacher competent to teach the foundation course on the histories of Asian countries. In the second semester of the 1957-1958 school year, five persons taught the modern history of Asian countries: Zhouyiliang, Likezhen, Wushi Huang, Likaiwu and Xu Shiqian. The course on country histories and the thematic history of major Asian countries could not open. The students who chose to specialize in Asian history learned foreign languages, but did not take any specialized courses on history.<sup>60</sup> In 1958, as one of the five reform tasks of the Great Leap Forward, the history department saw the task of opening courses on

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<sup>59</sup> Dai Kelai, *Several Questions from Asian History Teaching and Researching Section..* In *Two-Side and Large-Letter Newspaper of Historiography Department*, vol.2, China Communist Branch in Historiography Department of Beijing University, 1958, p.35. Dai Kelai, specialized in Korean history, and later became the professor in Henan Zhengzhou University.

<sup>60</sup> Dai Kelai, *Several Questions from Asian History Teaching and Researching Section..* In *Two-Side and Large-Letter Newspaper of Historiography Department*, vol.2, China Communist Branch in Historiography Department of Beijing University, 1958, p.35.

Asia and the African countries within five years.<sup>61</sup> As director of Teaching and Research Office of Asian History, Zhou Yiliang hoped that by 1962 the Teaching and Research Office of Asian history could equip each country or group of countries with one or two people, and wanted to begin courses on the general history of all major Asian countries, on the recent modern history of some countries, and specialized courses for some main countries, as well as the history of national liberation struggles in every Asian countries.<sup>62</sup> But he did not realize this goal. Furthermore, instruction in the basic courses of Asian history sometimes lacked depth, and students noted of the very poor quality in the content of Asian history courses.<sup>63</sup> Students expressed their concern that it was often hard to tell which country's history a course covered because teachers of the new course on modern Asian history did not refer to the specific situation of each country. The course simply applied the categories of Marxism-Leninism to analyze historical facts, This made students think that each country had the same history.<sup>64</sup>

Before the Cultural Revolution, academic research focused only with limited success on the history of big Asian countries, such as Japan, India, or such politically more important countries as North Korea and Vietnam. The scholars didn't do their research that hard, and there were few papers and works on Asian History. Until 1958, in the Asian History Department of Peking University, research work made no progress at all.

The reality of the time influenced Asian history education. History

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<sup>61</sup> *Outline of Progressing Program in Beijing University (Darft)*, *Beijing University Journal*, no.245, 1958.

<sup>62</sup> Zhou Yiliang, *Suggestion to Asian History Teaching and Researching Section..* In *Two-Side and Large-Letter Newspaper of Historiography Department*, vol.4, China Communist Branch in Historiography Department of Beijing University, 1958, p.46.

<sup>63</sup> Pan Xianreng, *What are the Objections of Specialized Teaching in Asian History?* In *Two-Side and Large-Letter Newspaper of Historiography Department*, vol.2, 1958, p.36.

<sup>64</sup> Pan Xianreng, *What are the Objections of Specialized Teaching in Asian History?* In *Two-Side and Large-Letter Newspaper of Historiography Department*, vol.2, 1958, p.36.

departments at Chinese universities began attaching importance to education and research on the history of Asian countries. The contemporary domestic and international system required that historical education and research destroy the Eurocentrism of world history.<sup>65</sup> After the victory of the Chinese revolution, Stalin agreed that China should play an important role in Asia, and he also hoped that China should not only play some role in the revolution of Asian countries, but also in opening diplomatic relations throughout the region. Political requirements naturally stimulated historical scholars who paid attention to the history of Asia. But this reality brought about multifaceted consequences. First, the education of Asian history must serve real politics, but the professors found it difficult. At that time, the students who chose specialized Asian history in the History Department of Peking University felt that the training objectives for a specialization in Asian History lacked specific goals. Zhou Yiliang, the director of the Asian History Teaching and Research Office, trained students for the knowledge of general history of Asia. On this basis, they laid particular stress on a specific country. But if we must cultivate knowledge of general Asian history, students often could not either learn general history of the whole Asia nor acquire deep understanding of a specific country. How can these students become professional after learning some languages such as Vietnamese? Even though we want to culture the expertise of a certain country's history, any course on a specific major countries was not opened. Because majority of students did not understand the language of those countries, it was impossible to study a certain country's history.

At that time, people generally felt that China and other Asian countries had more frequent contact after the liberation of China, and that

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<sup>65</sup> Li Haiwen, *Nearby the Historical Giants: Shizhe's Reminiscences* (the Revised and Enlarged Edition), Beijing: China Central Communist Party School Press, 1998, p.402.

the country needed a large number of cadres in this regard, so considering their future prospects, some students thought that they if they majored in Asian History they could become diplomats and go to other Asian countries. Some felt that since the new Asian history was unpopular, with few scholars engaged in the history of all Asian countries, they would find a very promising future. Some students chose Asian History to study a foreign language. Some people who had no interest in history chose Asian History simply because they did not vote for Chinese history or world history, but took Asian History as an elective. Reality made some students favor specialization in Asian history, but few were really interested in learning about and studying Asian history. Some students who had no interest in Asian History at all requested to study specialized Asian History as an elective.<sup>66</sup> Furthermore, the leaders, teachers and students of the History Department often did not pay enough attention to Asia history. Jian Bozan, the chairman of the Department of History at Peking University, said there is no history of India to the students who learn the history of India, The students also often had an excuse that the Asian History teachers were not competent and they did not study hard. They blamed that the teachers designated too many reference books when they took examinations, and even some students hinted that they would not study Asian history. Especially later on, the fact proved that China did not really need so many cadres and diplomats who understand the history of Asian countries, even if there was a need, most of the cadres and diplomats were the students who learned language of these countries. The history of Asian countries could not become real popular.

Moreover, with the stability of New China, China has also expanded the scope of diplomacy, the demand on the national manpower

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<sup>66</sup>“Specialization is the Short Cut to One’s Fame,” *Two-Side and Large-Letter Newspaper of Historiography Department*, vol.2, 1958, p.44.

was more diversified, and that not limited to the talent understand the history of Asian countries. First, China started to attach importance to Africa in order to break the diplomatic situation after the Bandung Asian-African conference in 1955. Then China needed many diplomatic experts who understood Africa very much, which led to the research and education of African history being put on the agenda.<sup>67</sup> In 1958 Zhou Yiliang advised ‘the relations between West Asia and African countries and China is increasingly close, West Asia and Africa countries’ national liberation movements are growing, we could not tolerate the work of the teaching and research of West Asia and Africa country to continue in a blank state, so I proposed several courses in this area should be started in the classrooms of Asian History Department in the in Autumn of 1958, the classrooms will be set up if only the conditions are ripe. The History Department of Peking University which was a history professional in the past divided into Chinese history, world history and archaeology three branches, World history branch had three teaching and research offices, Asian History Department expanded into the Department of Asian and African history, modern and contemporary history of Asian countries also sought to extend basic courses to the “Asian-African History” curricula.<sup>68</sup> Due to the lack of professors who understand African history, Professor Yang Renbian who researches the history of France voluntarily switched to engage in African history, and who led a number of teaching assistants and graduate students who were the fresh graduates staying at school. They started the work of teaching and research of African history after the Research Group of African History was set up within the Department of Teaching and Research of the Asian-African History, so

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<sup>67</sup> Zhou Yiliang. *Suggestion to Asian History Teaching and Researching Section, Two-Side and Large-Letter Newspaper of Historiography Department*, vol.4, China Communist Branch in Historiography Department of Beijing University, 1958, p.46.

<sup>68</sup> The other two are the Ancient World History Teaching and Researching Section and the Contemporary World History Teaching and Researching Section.

the General History of Africa courses were reluctantly opened, which was combined with the original General History of the Asian countries History curricula. The teaching program of the History Department of Peking University which was enacted in August 1959 prescribed that the basic course of General History of the world was divided into ancient world history, modern world history, modern history of the world and Asia-Africa history of ancient times and mediaeval times, the Asian and African Modern History, the two sets of Asian-African modern history. The teaching programs were designed for the students enrolled in 1959. The history departments of many universities in china had also made a similar change except the History Department of Peking University. An Asia-Africa Institute was also set up In Beijing.<sup>69</sup>

In April 1961, the planning meeting of the compilation of the teaching materials of university revised and formulated the “Teaching Program of the History majors in the History Department (revised draft)” based on the Bill co-sponsored by Peking University, Beijing Normal University, the Bill of Fudan University. Two sets of original East General History and West General History would be opened together. The results of implementation, as Zhou Yiliang pointed out that the East General History should often be squeezed out if the two sets of General History be opened together.<sup>70</sup> In 1963 the amendment of teaching programs was discussed at Peking University’s History Department, which mainly referred to the teaching programs of the Moscow University’s History Department of Soviet Union. The new teaching programs of Peking University’s History Department were revised in light of three professional of Chinese history, world history and archaeological history. According to the teaching program, no matter

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<sup>69</sup> Zhen Jiaxing, *African History*, In *Forty Years of Chinese Historiography*, edited by Xiao Li, Reference and Literature Press, 1989, p.744.

<sup>70</sup> *Meeting among the Dean of Teaching and Researching Section and Teaching Group*, vol.9, no.13, case no.94, 1962. It is the seminar material about teaching plans.

students who chose the professional of China history or the professional of world history should study three years of the professional basis of General History of the Chinese and General History of the world. Europe and the United States history part and Asia and Africa history and the two courses of modern world history, modern history of the world were opened separately in order to strengthen the study of general history of the world history, Europe and United States modern history, modern history in Europe and America, Asia and Africa modern history, the Asian and African modern history were opened separately. The major lessons were divided into two specialized groups: Europe and the United States history, Asia and Africa history. Thus, the Ancient part of the world general history was formed, and the modern history of Europe and the United States and Asian and African history were opened separately. This curriculum program mainly reflects the views of Zhang Zhilian who was the deputy director. At the time being, the program of Chinese history and world history drafted by Zhang Zhilian pointed out that modern history of the East juxtaposed with modern history of the West, and the modern history of the Western juxtaposed with the modern history of the East in terms of the basic professional lessons of the world general history.

After the liberation, attention also paid to Latin America under the backyard of the United States for the need of anti-Americanism. After Cuban revolution in 1959, the Latin American region was paid more attention to, so the history of Latin America was separated from American history and it gradually became an independent branch discipline. By the late 1970s, the history of Asia, the history of Africa and the history of Latin America have been combined, and the Department of Asian and African History of the History School of Peking University also expanded in Asia, Africa Departments of History. Thereby, the part of modern history of the World General History will be divided into two sections: European and American history and Asia, Africa, Latin America history. Henceforth, this approach continued a

long-term until 2007 when it will be the last year of the implementation of basic class system of the World General History in the History Department of Peking University. From the time of the establishment of the History of Asian countries, then the expansion of the Asian-African history, and the further widening the history of Asia, Africa and Latin America, we were faced with a greater challenge in general, the integrity of Asia history of its own in correspondingly became weakened, so the independent Disciplinary System of Asia History has not yet been established.

After the Cultural Revolution, Chinese history scholars had begun to rethink the diversity and integrity of world history, and the unity and difference in its development. Wu Yuqin put forward the vertical and horizontal development of the “Macro-World History” system in the 1980s, and stressed the historical overall view of world history, even claimed to bring the Chinese history into world history system,<sup>71</sup> while the Professor Luo Rongqu came up with the “Unitary and multi-linear view of the historical development of the world”<sup>72</sup> emphasized the need to grasp the commonalities and differences of historical development in balance. The *World History* published in 1994-1995 edited by Wu Yuqin and Luo Rongqu had put China’s history into the history of the world, embodied the Wu Yuqin’s *overall view of history*. Probably affected by this trend, many history departments at Universities no longer set up Asia history research office or Asia-Africa history research offices and, Asia, Africa, Latin-America research offices, and only related Latin-America, or Japan research offices or research centers were set up. Peking University history department still had a research office for the world ancient history, research office for Europe and the United States History

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<sup>71</sup> Wu Yuqin, “World History,” *Chinese Encyclopedia*, foreign history volume, Beijing: Chinese Encyclopedia Press, 1990.

<sup>72</sup> Luo Rongqu, *Views on Monistic and Multi-linear Theory of World History Development*, In *History Research*, no.1, 1989.

and research office for Asia, Africa History, but also has begun to reform the teaching of World General History, and will replace the former World General History by World History and a group of courses consisting of the geographical history of Asia History, Africa History, American History, European history, and other. In this way, the history of Asia will reappear on the arena. The effectiveness and impact of this change still need further observation.

## V. Conclusion

The history of Modern China is a process of looking at the world, re-understanding the world, but the history of modern China, has long laid particular stress on Chinese history, especially the Chinese Ancient History, so Yang Xiangkui thinks that the History Department of Peking University in the 1930s did was like “professional Chinese ancient history.” China’s long historical tradition, Textual Criticism of the Qing Dynasty, make China’s Ancient History achievement a relatively earlier learning specialization.<sup>73</sup> As for the history of the world, although the starting is not late, but its level of development not only does not agree with the situation of China in modern times, also is very asymmetric with the Chinese history. Moreover, although there are many people stress the integrity of World History from the very beginning, but the history of China’s periphery is lack of attention. This is probably because in reality Europe is the center of the world in modern times, the influence of the European Center in the history is hard to eliminate in the academic world.

In addition, the formation and development of the well-known historian of Japan is closely related to modern Japan’s colonial expansion process. China is contrary to the situation with Japan, with the original

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<sup>73</sup> Yang Xiangkui, *Reminiscence to Yugong*, In *History and Geography*, no.1, 1981.

belonged states having become Western powers and Japan's colony, neighboring countries seem to be lost from the sight of China.<sup>74</sup> Therefore, although some scholars stressed that the East and the West rarely contacted in ancient with relative independence, they have failed to establish an independent real Disciplinary System of the Asian History (Oriental History).

Since 1949, with the changes in the situation at home and abroad, the Asian re-entry into the Chinese people's vision, Asian history has also been given unprecedented attention. But as the Chinese people's political vision expanded to Africa, Latin America, the History of Asia gradually expanded to the Asian-African history and the history of Asia, Africa, and Latin America. As a result, the work of establishing the overall History of Asia, Africa and Latin failed, and the independence of the history of the Asian submerged too.

After the reform and development, the Chinese people once again focused attention on the West and Japan, and other Asian minority powers, the degree of attention to history of Asia, Africa and Latin once weakened. In recent years, as China's national strength increased, they began to pay attention to Asia and Africa, and other regions. Such a situation will naturally have a certain impact on the history. Currently, the History Department of Peking University has been reforming the General History of the World which had been formed in the modern history as a basic professional compulsory course, Asian history and the history of Africa, the European history, American history, and other geographical history re-floated. We hope this change can not only promote balanced development of regional history in the History, but also can establish an understanding system of the regional history with Chinese characteristics.

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<sup>74</sup> The idea of contemporary Chinese about Korea is a good example. Please refer to my book: *Learning Others and Self-Reflection: The Idea of Contemporary Chinese about Korea*. In *Modern History Research*, no.2, 2007.