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Writing Chinese Ethnography of Foreign Societies

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Chinese ethnography of foreign societies (CEFS henceforth, *yuwai minzuzhi* 域外民族志) is an emerging subdiscipline of anthropology in China, but it is not a totally new invention. Indeed, in China there is a very “thick” tradition of writing foreign societies. First, a lot of ideas on foreign societies can be seen both in Chinese historiographies, in religious texts, as well as in private monographs such as travelogues (Wang Mingming, 2011b). Second, the internal heterogeneity should be considered since the term “Chinese” may involve many different ethnic groups living in the current Chinese territory. Third, during the long history of China, various Chinese worldviews came into being and they were shared by a number of groups of people. For example, the notion of *wufu* 五服 implies a classification of all areas “under Heaven” 天下 according to their sociocultural/civilizing distances away from the centered authorities represented by *Tianzi* 天子 (Son of Heaven), is a typical worldview of traditional China and it still makes sense for some contemporary Chinese people (Wang Mingming, 2004: 270-271). Another example of the Chinese view of the self-other relations is reflected by the Chinese expression *ta shan zhi shi* 它山之石 (literally “stones from other hills”) in *Shijing* 诗经 (*Classic of Poetry*). It suggests others could help and correct us in one way or another and that from others we come to know ourselves. As I will try to show in this paper, the relationship between this thick legacy and the current CEFS is very delicate.

However, Chinese writings about foreign societies in the western anthropological sense did not exist until the beginning of 20th century. In the following pages, I will firstly make a brief review of the CEFS in the Republican era and under Mao’s reign, before focusing on contemporary trends in the domain. In this paper, researches conducted by Chinese scholars but published in foreign languages (mainly in English)¹ will in principle not be taken into account, but

¹ For example, Tian Rukang’s study of Chinese in Sarawak, Malaysia, 1953; Francis Hsu’s *Iemoto: the heart of Japan*, 1975; Xiang Biao’s research of the Indian labor system in the information technology industry, 2007; Wu Di 吴迪’s study of Chinese working in Africa, 2015; Qiu Yu 邱昱’s study of Chinese living in post-colonial Nigeria, 2018.

authors from ethnic minorities such as Tibetan, Uygur, Mongolian, and those from Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan, will be included if they publish in Chinese languages (Han language or other ethnic languages).

Bringing the Euro western anthropology into the thick legacy: Wu Zelin and Li Anzhai (or Li An-che)'s works

Soon after the introduction of the Euro western anthropology into China during the early period of the Republic era (1911-1950), Chinese anthropologists began to conduct studies in foreign countries. The most important two figures are Wu Zelin 吴泽霖 (1898-1990) and Li Anzhai 李安宅 (1900-1985).

Wu Zelin's PhD research accomplished in 1927 focused upon American attitudes toward Blacks, Jews and Oriental peoples, mainly Chinese and Japanese. It was originally written in English but has never been published. The Chinese translation appeared only in 1992, two years after the author's death. In this book Wu Zelin spent lengthy chapters on describing discriminations that the three groups of people suffered in the United States. According to him, the way to solve the inter-racial problems between Whites and Orientals is to get rid of those seclusion policies and laws; he also mentioned the idea of using racial co-operation and intermarriage between Blacks and Whites to reduce Whites' discrimination toward Blacks (Wu Zelin, 1992: 262-292). In this research we cannot find any specialties linked with the author's Chinese background.

However, in Li Anzhai's famous article about Zuñi people in New Mexico, we can see a clear Chinese view.² When he arrived at his research field on June 15, 1935, he introduced himself to locals "as one from China who was anxious to learn the wisdom of other peoples in order to teach my own people better" (Li Anzhai, 1937: 62). Through such a notion of "China" he clearly built the connection between his fieldwork and the understanding of his mother culture. Moreover, in his paper, Li Anzhai demonstrated that the cultural notions an anthropologist holds may influence deeply his or her perspective for interpretation (Qiao Jian, 1999: 35). According to Li Anzhai, these notions, including modern western religious notions, modern notions of law, and ideology of capitalism, were taken for granted and caused in one way or another bias or misinterpretations towards others. It is interesting that Chinese notions can help Li Anzhai to neutralize American ethno-centrism and to build a third perspective, which is neither American nor local.



Fig. 1 - Li Anzhai. The photo was taken when he was in a fieldwork outside China during 1947-1949³

² See, in this numero, the French translation of Li Anzhai's article, 1937.

³ We thank Mrs Meng Yun who offers us this precious photo.

Li Anzhai addressed four topics: religion, leadership, discipline, and kinship and marriage. On each of these topics, Li Anzhai criticized American anthropologists' misinterpretation of Zuñi cultures. For example, according to Alfred Kroeber, when a man has built a house, and "he and his wife quarrel and separate, even though for no other reason than her flagrant infidelity, he walks out and leaves the edifice to her and his successor without the least thought of being deprived of anything that is his." Therefore "the Zuñi does not have an inkling of having been chivalrous in such an abandonment" (1917: 89). Li Anzhai commented, "from the standpoint of Western culture, this is extraordinary indeed" (Li Anzhai, 1937: 72). However, Li Anzhai revealed that a Zuñi man has no worries about a house because he always has a place to go to: living with either his wife, or his maternal relatives as this is a maternal society, in which a man's structural position is the opposite to that of man in paternal society. It is here that Li Anzhai's Chinese cultural resources come into play. According to him,

"What we find as an attitude typical of the wives of brothers in a Chinese family is surprisingly comparable to that of the husbands of sisters in a Zuñi family. I cannot resist the temptation of making a comparison, in spite of my conscious effort to keep away from any irrelevant associations. While Chinese wives are married into the husbands' family, or rather her husbands' parents' family, the Zuñi husbands are married into their wives' parents' family. ... Thus, he is quite comparable to a Chinese woman who is married into the man's family. ... We are likely to believe in China that the petty troubles among the wives of the brothers are the result of definitely womanish qualities. It is a revelation to find the husbands of Zuñi sisters in similar difficulties, and what is more, such difficulties are due to similar adjustments irrespective of sex. An American woman may find it strange that co-wives could manage to live together at all, and it is equally strange for a Chinese to see the friendly relations between the ex-husbands of a particular Zuñi woman. America seems to lie inbetween in making emotional judgments; but a Chinese must actually see the matrilineal community at Zuñi in order to realize with any degree of vividness that a woman can be the carrier of a clan, which would become extinct were there no longer women members." (Li Anzhai, 1937: 75-76; Chen Bo, 2007)

Li Anzhai's research aroused immediate echoes in the American anthropologist circle⁴ and remained an important model for CEFS. The Wu-Li contrast foreshadows the two approaches of CEFS in the 21st century: one follows western anthropological discourses, largely ignoring the author's own Chinese background; the other is more interested in building a Chinese perspective.

Compared with Wu and Li, who were both trained by Anglo-Saxon anthropology, scholars of the generation having grown up academically after the year 1950 were in a very different situation. When they began their studies in

⁴ His eminent re-study of Zuñi people touched American anthropologists of the time, one of whom is Cornelius Osgood (1905-1985), later on the chair of Yale Anthropology department. Based on the revelations Li Anzhai's study on Zuñi demonstrated, he and Li Anzhai once even initiated some collaborative research, as they were about to co-study each other's hometown and write ethnographies independently to see how each researcher's cultural background affected his writings. This grand program was stopped by the Japanese invasion of China, however. They met shortly in 1938 for Osgood's study of a lakeside Hanese village in Kunming, Yunnan (Chen Bo, 2010, chapter 2; Osgood, 1963: 367-368, 1985).

universities, the courses they could opt for were dominated by Marxism and teachings about Chinese tradition were reduced to a minimal level. This double predicament was somehow maintained largely throughout the 1980s. During nearly four decades, no student could go to a foreign country and do fieldwork in the serious sense, and CEFS was limited to studies on cross-border ethnic groups and overseas connections.

CEFS in the Rebuilding of Chinese anthropology

Over the last two decades, anthropology in mainland China has been undergoing a process of vibrant revival. In the mid 1990s, scholars led by Fei Xiaotong 费孝通 (1910-2005) began to remake anthropology, on the one hand, by differentiating it from politicized ethnology (*minzu xue* 民族学), and on the other, by redirecting and rechanneling it to both the western socio-cultural anthropology and the Chinese heritage. The seminars, sponsored by the Peking University and attended by scholars from mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan and foreign countries, motivated anthropologists, ethnologists and cultural historians to pursue new targets along new tracks. Chinese pioneers of anthropology since the late Qing dynasty (1636-1911), especially those who were active during the early Republic era (1912-1949), were included in the seminars' reading lists. Students were directed to pay attention to classics both in Chinese and in English.

In 2007, a critical journal entitled 中国人人类学评论 (*Chinese Review of Anthropology*; as CRA henceforth) was created, which from the very start has given an important place to CEFS. For example, in the first volume, a report of a seminar on He Ting's 贺霆 study of Chinese medicine in French society was published. He addressed how cultural rules regulate people's acceptance of Chinese medicine in France. During He Ting's seminar, people also discussed how Chinese scholars could go out of the country to conduct fieldwork and to study the methodology of doing anthropology in western countries (He Ting, 2007). In Volume 3, I published a paper on Li Anzhai's study of Zuñi based on data gathered through my revisit of Zuñi in 2005; Liang Yongjia published a report of the seminar on Indian astrological interpretation of tsunamis. In Volume 5, published in 2008, a special column paid homage to the first modern Chinese scholars who visited and/or wrote on foreign societies, including Liang Shuming 梁漱溟 (1893-1988), Wu Zeling, Fei Xiaotong, Chu Anping 储安平 (1909-1966), Xu Langguang 许烺光 (1909-1999), Gu Zhun 顾准 (1915-1974), and Qiao Jian 乔健. In Volume 12, my study of the Lo in Nepal (Chen Bo, 2009) was published. In Volume 16, Luo Yang 罗杨 published her initial study of the historical description of Cambodia by Zhou Dagan 周达观 (Luo Yang, 2011). This volume also published Li Anzhai's memoir on his oversea visits (Li Anzhai, 2011). In the 20th volume, Uradyn E. Bulag 乌·额·宝力格, a scholar from Ordos, Inner Mongol, based at Cambridge now, contributed his memoir to the retrospect of his study of the Mongol (Bulag, 2011).

In this context, Fei's mode of native anthropology studies was contested by some scholars (Wang Mingming, 2011b, 2014). Some researchers explicitly claimed that they attempted to contribute something new to the building of Chinese social science through conducting field studies in a foreign society (Wang Mingming, 2004; Gao Binzhong, 2006).

The Minzu University of China 中央民族大学 (MUC henceforth) also played an important role in the building of CEFS. In November 2011, the MUC Institute of Global Ethnology and Anthropology (IGEA henceforth) was established, thanks to which more ethnographers engaged in oversea studies. In 2012, MUC set up an Overseas Fieldwork Fund to support ethnographers. By now more than ten young scholars have been funded to go abroad and study foreign societies in Southeast Asia, South Asia, Oceania, and Africa. MUC's endeavor was soon joined by anthropologists from Sun Yat-sen University and Zhejiang University, who went abroad for their fieldwork. From 2012 to 2014, they co-sponsored three workshops on oversea ethnography, which gathered about 200 young scholars in total for discussing methodological issues. In December 2016, IGEA held a conference focusing on the CEFS experiences in the previous decade. By the end of June 2017, IGEA had held 101 lectures altogether. According to Yang Chunyu (2014), by 2014 more than fifty Chinese scholars have conducted fieldwork in societies of all six continents.

Multiple others and Chinese Perspective

As mentioned above, we could identify roughly two models of CEFS. Scholars following the first model have no intention to relate their intellectual activities to the historical, epistemological, ontological, and cosmological elements of the Chinese legacies. To a certain extent, this model is in line with Wu Zelin's research. Another model is still latent and marginal. It is a renewed version of Li Anzhai's model for introducing a Chinese perspective in doing ethnography.

In 1996, Wang Mingming 王铭铭, a graduate from the University of London, had a dialogue with a Japanese anthropologist who criticized Chinese anthropologists for always conducting studies on their domestic issues even when they were in a foreign country. This pushed Wang Mingming to make a deep reflection on how overseas studies are possible for Chinese anthropologists. According to Wang Mingming (2006), in order to better conduct an anthropologist's work, one has to develop new concepts from the researcher's own thick cultural legacy. With this consideration in mind, he published a study in 2001 on the Puy Saint André mountain at Briançon, in France. This paper reveals the striking similarity in notions of society and ancestors, and in the village commune systems between French society and Chinese Han society. According to him, his stay in France is critical for him to compare the two world systems, so as to better understand the origins and the consequences of the nation-state building in modern China (Wang Mingming, 2002). Later, Wang Mingming integrated this experience into his theory of three circles of Chinese anthropology. If there is a Chinese cosmology as an intellectual foundation for its ethnography of foreign societies, it must be a three-circle kind: the first circle of study focuses on the core part of China, namely Han peasant societies; the second circle of study pays attention to those living between the core part and the outside, that is, minority societies; finally, the third circle encompasses the study of overseas foreign societies (Wang Mingming, 2004: 271-274, 2005: 8), as in Ding's approach of Nenets in Northwestern Russia (Ding Hong, 2009) and Wang Mingming's research in France (2002) embody. This academic cosmology is by no means evolutionist or self-centrist, but rather other-centrist and more concerned on its relation with its multiple others (Wang Mingming, 2009).

In a dialogue with his colleagues undertaken in October 2007, Wang Mingming insisted on what he had suggested in 1990: if there is any Chinese contribution to anthropology worldwide, it should be an anthropology that is based upon Chinese tradition of anthropological investigations, key case studies, and key concepts (for example, Fei Xiaotong's "Differential Mode of Association [chaxue geju 差序格局]") (Xu Xinjan, Wang Mingming & Zhou Daming, 2008: 88). Another anthropologist, Liang Yongjia, takes a similar position. After his fieldwork in India in early 2006, he remarked that the future of Chinese anthropology of foreign societies would be fruitful only when we have created subsuming conceptual notions from our thick legacies to include Euro-western anthropological achievements (Liang Yongjia, 2008, 2009).

If many scholars agree with Wang Mingming and Liang Yongjia, however, how to bring forth such notions in field studies remains problematic (Zhang Jinling, 2011: 63). For this, Chinese anthropologists have elaborated different approaches. In the next section, I will present a critical review of their contributions.

CEFS approaches

Luo Yang's research on Cambodia: a historical structural approach

A historical connection is important for an ethnographer to build his/her research. In history, many countries were tributaries of "China," with which they still maintain close relations nowadays. Centuries ago Chinese records were written about them, which may form the concrete foundation for contemporary Chinese ethnographers to construct meaningful and in-depth studies on these people. It is in Luo Yang's works that we can find an exemplary treatment of the relations between history and ethnography, between foreign studies and Chinese cosmology, and between scholarships from different countries.

Luo Yang is one of the first young scholars who conducted fieldwork in foreign societies in the first decade of this century. When she was an undergraduate student, she was supported by the Institute of Anthropology at Sichuan University to make a field study on the history of the University of Washington's anthropology in 2005-2006, the result of which was published in 2008 in *Chinese Review of Anthropology* (Luo Yang, 2008). In her PhD dissertation (2012), she moved to villages near Angkor Wat, Cambodia, where she spent about eight months in 2011. For this field study, she prepared well beforehand. In 2001, she published her reading of Zhou Dagan (about 1266-1346), the author of *真腊风土记* (*Customs of Cambodia*), of the Yuan Dynasty (1206-1368) (Luo Yang, 2011). The dissertation cherished Zhou Dagan's tradition, especially bridging the gap between her writings and historical contributions in writing/interpreting Cambodia as the other in history.

Theoretically, she turns out to be a historical structuralist after years of anthropological training at Peking University. The issue she tackles in Cambodia is how modern Cambodian society conjunctures the two historical foreign forces of Hinduization and Buddhization and embodies them in village lives as a way to be connected to historical transformation. Starting from a discussion of Zhou Dagan, rediscovering the point of view of the other from his records (Luo Yang, 2016a: 21), following studies by western or western-trained anthropologists such as Georges Cœdès, Gu Zhengmei, Ashley Thompson, Ang Choulean, Stanley Tambiah, she tends

to explore the situation of Buddhist monks and Brahmin Agas, as well as their relations to each other in the modern nation-state. According to her, although there are tensions and exclusions between them, they co-operate with each other to perform rituals.

Buddhism took over Hinduism during the 14th century but nowadays both traditions still interact with each other through professional religious practitioners and common village participants who hold their pre-Hinduism native cultural logic of matrilineage, animism, original worship of ancestors, earth, and mountains, and their specific cosmology based on a binarity principle (*ibid.*: 11-13, 17, 25).

According to Luo Yang's criticism, if French Orientalists came to study Cambodia to serve their colonial control of it, if missionaries tried to "civilize" the so-called "backward local barbarians" through their missions, anthropologists who followed those colonial scholars and missionaries did not do it better: despite their critique of colonialism, they neglected or denied the local agency and capability in exploring both the local people's "others" and themselves (*ibid.*: 10-11, 19). In fact, those anthropologists either decontextualized locals into historical vacuum as if locals had no contacts with neighbors, or when they recognized such contacts, they marginalized them as living at edges of (Indian and Confucian) civilizations lacking their own centrism.



Fig. 2 - Luo Yang in a marriage ceremony during her fieldwork (row one, the first from the right, in red), Siem Reap, Cambodia, 2011

Then how did Luo Yang contribute to the scholarship with her bridging endeavor by going back to Zhou Dagan, an author from the Mongolian-Yuan of the thirteenth century? She suggested that Zhou Dagan's records represent a kind of intermediary circle: at one end there lies the center of his Huaxia 华夏 (ancient Chinese) civilization, and at the other the extreme limit of all under the heaven. The center of the Huaxia civilization needs to adopt native products in order to make itself perfect as required by its claim as a civilization, while the so-called "barbarians" cannot detach themselves from Huaxia. According to his monograph, Zhen-la is one of the centers of their civilizations, having its rules and regulations. As he noted, Tang people (Ch. 唐人, or Chinese) were once respected as Buddha by Cambodians, but exile Tangs were denigrated among locals as they disobeyed or even broke local customs and were treated as "barbarians" (*ibid.*: 20-21). In a short piece, employing a structural approach, she obviously connected her field experience with those Zhou Dagan described (*ibid.*: 215-218). For her, the basic frame she used to interpret these villages is relationist ethnography consisting in four sets of relations (Luo Yang, 2013), borrowed from Wang Mingming, as stated above.

Transnational Minzu studies: Consecutive research on the same ethnic group in a foreign country

Most studies so far are on this-side-of-the-border-connected groups of people living in border-connected areas in foreign countries. In China, there are thirty Minzus recognized by the Beijing central government after 1950s who have their members living in another country, being distanced away by the national border line. We could say that studies on these foreign people began when their overland compatriots were recognized as a *Minzu* in China.⁵ Since the early 1980s, they were brought into academic attention and became special topics for graduate programs in universities such as the MUC. Scholars noticed different situations of the compatriot partners of Chinese Minzus living on the other side of the state border. In 2007, the Minzu Institute of Yunnan University initiated an overseas (actually over land) research program on those living in areas on the other side of the border, who have their compatriot partners in the Yunnan Province, China (He Ming, 2014).

As far as this subject is concerned, one of the most remarkable contributions of contemporary Chinese ethnographers is their research on the Dong Gan Muslim people who have migrated from Shaanxi and Gansu to Kyrgyzstan since the 1870s. Different from Luo Yang's research of Cambodia, who has an ancient literature to follow, in the study of Dong Gan people, contemporary Chinese ethnographers, such as Hu Zhenhua 胡振华, Ding Hong 丁宏 and Hao Sumin 郝苏民 among others, have to start from nothing for building up a research field since late last century.

Ding Hong, a graduate of Hu Zhenhua – a famous linguist focusing on Kyrgyzstan and the first to study Dong Gan people during the Soviet period – started her ethnographic enterprise in the 1990s. She published her monograph in 1999. It is about the connection between Hui people living in China and the Dong Gan people in Kyrgyzstan, and the social transformation the latter experienced. This study forms the building block of the study of Dong Gan people in China and motivated researchers to go and write about this group in different forms. Later

⁵ See Aga Zuoshi's paper in this issue.

on, out of her visit to the Nenets in northwestern Russia in 2007, Ding Hong opened a new chapter in her studies and even promoted a new concept of the Reindeer Culture on North Polar Tundra 北极冻土带驯鹿文化 (Ding Hong, 2011: 36) to describe the way of life of Nenets. It is a promising Chinese concept to be developed.

Li Rudong 李如东, one of Ding Hong's doctoral students, is also a fieldworker on Dong Gan people. Following the theory of Robert Redfield and Fredrik Barth, Li Rudong tried to illustrate how Dong Gan people identify themselves in their relations with former Soviet Union and their original ancestral land in China, how different groups within them argue with each other for being the authentic representative of the whole Dong Gan people, and how they re-categorize the local environment under the nexus of living in Kyrgyzstan, a quite alien place (Li Rudong, 2016). His review of English literatures, finished before his fieldwork, guaranteed him a wide perspective of the topic (Li Rudong, 2014). Basing on these studies, he is now expanding his research to larger areas and other topics.

Besides, we should not forget to mention Guo Peiyi 郭佩宜, in Taiwan, who followed Liu Bingxiong 刘斌雄's example and went to study Oceania islands' peoples (Guo Peiyi, 2008).

Overseas societies: China/Chinese-related topics

Another central issue of CEFS is border crossing Chinese peoples. For example, Cao Nanlai 曹南来 followed Wenzhou business immigrants and went to study them in France to reveal how their Christian belief supported and shaped their lives there (Cao Nanlai, 2016a, 2016b). Liu Zhaohui 刘朝晖 traced the Qiu-surnamed Fujian group of people downward to their descendants in Malaysia, finding the connectedness and disconnectedness between these overseas Chinese and the natives in China (Liu Zhaohui, 2009a, 2009b).

In ethnomusicology studies, scholars focused on cross-border ethnic groups such as Koreans, Dais 傣族, and Bulgangs 布朗族, connecting China and Thailand, Burma, Laos, and Korea (Yang Minkang *et al.*, 2017b).

Li Anshan 李安山, professor at the Peking University, finished a monograph on Chinese populations in Africa. Starting from the pre-Tang dynasty, Li Anshan traced the history of this group of people all the way down to 1999, focusing on their local lives and their relations with China (Li Anshan, 2000). Xu Wei 徐薇, a young anthropologist on Botswana, also studied the predicaments of Chinese in Africa and contributed some ideas on how to deal with them (Xu Wei, 2014).

Aga Zuoshi 阿嘎佐诗, an anthropologist who got her doctoral degree in 2007, went to study how Singapore as a nation-state was born out of a fishing village; she focused especially on the invention of traditions, especially through exhibitions in the Raffles Hotel Museum. The starting point of Singapore was represented as the meeting point between the east and the west (Aga Zuoshi, 2007).

I focus on Tibet with a similar approach. After thirteen months of fieldwork in 2002 and 2003 in suburb Lhasa, I came to know Bod-pa (Ti. བོད་པ་; People living in Lhasa and areas around it) quite well. In the sense of Tibetan civilization, however, I am not familiar with those Tibetan-speakers who have been living in Nepal for

centuries. To expand my knowledge, with the support of Asian Scholarship in 2007, I went to Nepalese Lo-yul where I observed the “intermediateness” (Wang Mingming, 2014: 14) among the people of Lo-pa. I connected them to both sides: the caste system from the south and the Tibetan Buddhism from the north, plus their basic Bon, a shaman characterized belief. Their practice of polyandry was shaped by both ideologies of patrilineage of the south and of house of the north (Chen Bo, 2011). To better understand Lo-pa and their position, I employed the notion of “cross-area connection” to illustrate their interconnectedness with surrounding ethnic groups.



Fig. 3 - A Nepalese local therapist was treating the Chinese anthropologist Chen Bo's toothache, Himalaya area, 2008

After that, since the western discourse of “Tibet” impacts greatly modern interpretations and political controversies on and in China, I attempted to study in an anthropological manner European notions such as “nation,” “empire,” “kingdom” and “China proper,” etc., and their cultural/civilization backgrounds; all form into a meaning system which functions in both explicit and implicit ways to change the notion of “Zhongguo” 中国 (“China” in Chinese) (Chen Bo, 2016). This has led me to try to trace European notions about political entities backward into history and downward into European daily lives to see how these notions are employed.

Xiao Mei 萧梅, a Mongolian ethnomusicologist from Shanghai Conservatory, working on the wide area from Northern and Northwestern China to central Asia and down to South Asia, traced the music practice of Holin-Chor 呼麦 (Хөөмий, or Mooden Chor), a kind of throat singing that produces symphonic results through one person, and related practices such as using one instrument to create the same result (Xiao Mei, 2013, 2014). Intellectually influenced by Wang Mingming, in her lecture delivered on December 8, 2017 at Peking University, she attempted to view such practices as a Holin-Chor civilization that pervades many ethnic groups in a quite large area or that helps them communicate.

Yang Minkang 杨民康, an ethnomusicologist, following Wang Mingming, delineates Southeast Asia into two circles according to the music relations between Southeast China and Southeast Asia in history: the inner circle, mainly a Buddhist music zone, consists of the border-connected groups of people who influenced each other in Burma, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, and Yunnan, China. This circle could be further demarcated into the inner side and the outside. The music of the outer circle of Southeast Asia, including Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, and Philippine, is characterized by its Islam and Christian impactions (Yang Minkang, 2017a; *et al.* 2017b).

A promising future for CEFS would be born out of such a group of people who share the same academic characters as those presented above.

Folklore studies: Gao Binzhong and his ethnographic school

In 2001, Gao Binzhong 高丙中, a professor from Peking University's anthropology section, initiated his program of overseas ethnographic studies. Gao was originally trained in folklore studies, and some of his students also shared a similar academic background (Gong Haoqung, 2005). “*Dao haiwai qu* 到海外去 (Go to study overseas societies),” his slogan of going to study overseas societies (Gao Binzhong, 2006), is modeled after the one by ancestors in folklore studies in 1910s: *Dao minjian qu* 到民间去 [To save China] (Go to study commoners in folk societies) (Wu Xingyun, 2004). He won abundant resources from the Chinese State and from foreign sources to invite a large number of students after 2002 (Gao Binzhong, 2009) to conduct fieldwork abroad. His project was sustained by Bao Zhiming 包智明 (2015), a Chinese Mongolian and a sociologist at MUC, who directs the IGEA although he never conducted fieldwork abroad himself. This group plays an important role in producing ethnographies on foreign societies in mainland China with six monographs published by 2012.

Their fieldwork reports focus mainly on the socio-cultural results of western modernity deployed to non-western countries. Many students have a strong mindset on exploring the citizen-state (*gongming guojia* 公民国家) relations in such foreign countries as Thailand, India, France, the United States, etc., following the program supervisor Gao Binzhong's recognition that China should be oriented toward the building of a civil society 公民社会 in the future.

Productive scholars such as Wu Xiaoli 吴晓黎 having conducted fieldwork in India, Bao Shan 宝山 in Mongolia, Gong Haoqun 龚浩群 in Thailand, Kang Min 康敏 in Malaysia, Zhang Jinling 张金岭 in France, Li Rongrong 李荣荣 in the United States, Yang Chunyu 杨春宇 in Australia, Zhou Xinhong 周歆红 in Germany, and Ma Qiang 马强 in Russia, among others, and contributed the writings of different foreign societies to the ethnographic topology of this school. Even Gao Binzhong himself, not intimidated by his age and the language obstacle, having failed to conduct fieldwork in early 2002, eventually made a two-week pre-fieldwork in the United States in 2007, which was, again, about the folklore in a town in Wisconsin (Gao Binzhong, 2008). As he did not give much space for alterity of American folklores, modernity was thus apprehended as the implementation of western ideals of modernity. His main scholarly contribution, however, is still in the field of folklore studies in China. More or less, this group forms a folklore school of Chinese ethnographies on foreign societies, though there are obviously mixtures of folklore orientations with anthropological orientations. Zhang Qingren 张青仁, who conducted fieldwork in Mexico in 2014-15, is an example of the modernity-folklore-anthropology mixture in ethnographic orientations (Zhang Qingren, 2016, 2017). The same orientation can also be observed in writings by Gong Haoqun (2005), Ma Qiang (2011a, 2016, 2017), Zhang Jinling (2011) and Kang Min (2009).

The contributions of scholars of ethnic minorities to CEFS

Recently, Chinese ethnographers have continued to expand their field. Scholars once focusing on studies of cross-border ethnic groups, including Tibetans, Uyurs, Mongolians, Zhuangs, Dais, Miaos (Hmongs), also go and undertake field studies on the same ethnic groups outside of the Chinese political borders. For example, scholars from Xinjiang University in Northwestern China went to Turkey to conduct studies on natives there; Qinghai Minzu University (QMU henceforth) and MUC started programs to study Tibetan-related ethnic groups in areas south of the Himalaya, in Nepal, Bhutan, Skim, and India, as part of the program on overseas/inland Chinese studies. Although Vasutkumar has recorded Tibetans at Labrang called the children of those Tibetans returned home after decades of living in exile as "*huaqiao* 华侨 (Chinese sojourners)" (Vasantkumar, 2012), for intellectuals to identify them as such is different. For example, in 2014, a program supervised by Ding Hong merged these distinctions to include minorities in diaspora such as Tibetans, Miaos, Yaos, Huis, and Uygurs, in the category of *huaqiao* (Ding Hong *et al.*, 2015). Su Faxiang 苏发祥, a Tibetan professor at MUC's Ethnology and Sociology College, motivated students to study Tibetan-related ethnic groups in Nepal. Tsebhe (ཙེབ་མེ; Ch. translation, 才贝), a faculty of QMU, went to Nepal, together with her two Tibetan colleagues, for a one-month fieldwork in 2016.

Based upon legends, interviews and documents, they focused on topics such as their travel experience, the making and circulation of Copper Buddha statues, narrations of the Pagoda and the Tibetan-Buddhist community around the Boudhanath in Kathmandu.

Scholars of ethnic minorities also contribute greatly to the research on China's inner diversity. In 2005, Zha Luo 扎洛, a Tibetan scholar from the Chinese Academy of Social Science in Beijing, started writing about the history of Himalayan countries during the Qing dynasty. Before and beyond that, he also conducted intensive studies on his hometown in the Qinghai Province and on general Tibetan history. In his last monograph (Zha Luo, 2012), he focused on the multi-state relations among Sikkim, Bhutan, and Nepal' Gorkar of the mountainous Himalaya, demonstrating a quite different but more comprehensive perspective than his former studies, reviewing historical events and resources from the state perspective. Another issue he dealt with is the border demarcation between China on the one side and Nepal, Sikkim, and Bhutan on the other during the late Qianlong period (1789-1795).

When Ma Qiang 马强, a Muslim Hui from Shaanxi, conducted fieldwork among Malaysia Muslim Chinese in 2008-2009, he tried to bring Chinese concepts such as "*hua* 华" into this field. According to him, "*hua-mu* 华-穆 (Chinese-Muslim)" is part of the "*hua-qiao* 华侨 (over-seas Chinese);" he obviously classifies Huizu 回族 into the category of "Chinese." It refers to those Muslims who have Malaysian nationality, but are "Chinese" physically, growing up with Chinese culture and civilizations of China (Ma Qiang, 2011b: 28).

Conclusion

In summary, the actual map of CEFS is shaped as in four circles: (1) the study of cross-border groups; (2) the study of societies in countries around China, or the China-connected circle; (3) the study of Chinese-connected societies beyond 1 and 2, which should be studied in a culture-conjuncture way; (4) the study of the circle of societies beyond 1, 2, and 3, which should be studied in a comparative sense.

CEFS has made great progress over the past few years, but one can still observe some defaults. First, most studies are based on the aide of local informants who speak English. Some scholars such as He Ming 何明 (2014) have realized this problem. In terms of methodology, CEFS runs the risk of returning to the pre-Malinowski stage of conducting fieldwork, if a researcher relies only on oral or literate translation through some informants but without the capacity for insuring the completeness and reliability of the information that s/he collects.

Generally speaking, it is still difficult for most studies to get a comprehensive and well-balanced consideration of the four sets of complicated relations of a locality, which are the relations between the inside and the outside, between hierarchical social strata, between the past and the present, and between different parts of a culture (Wang Mingming, 2011a). The most notable weakness of the current CEFS maybe the lack of historical dimension. It is often the case that neither the history of Chinese travels and writings about the studied foreign locality nor the history of this locality is taken into account. Besides, in many cases, the key notions scholars employed and the histories of such notions are not enough debated.

Moreover, the unit of the studied other is taken for granted to be the country itself, which was treated more or less as being homogeneous, having no diversity across the country in terms of ethnic groups, religions or beliefs, languages or dialects, etc. This leads to the tribalization of most of our ethnographies on foreign societies: they were narrated, in a way, like Malinowski's representations of the savages on the Pacific islands: no history, no hierarchy, no civilization, and no centralized political structure.

Last but not the least, Chinese anthropology is still in serious need of overseas ethnographic training. Some students go into their field without a solid foundation of disciplinary knowledge or a systematic planning of research.

Compared to those ethnographers who come to the same field from western universities, Chinese ethnographers are still beginners. However, even though it is too early to make our laudatory address to them, CEFS researchers deserve a particular encouragement for their contribution to the renewing of Chinese anthropology.

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