

华人性的理论探索：跨学科与跨国境的建构

In Search of Chineseness: Conceptualization and Paradigms¹

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Introduction

The idea of “Chineseness” has a different history in the West and in China, but in both places it has been shaped by the wider political, economic and cultural context, and by the specific geographic and social location of interlocutors as well. “Chineseness” in the West has traditionally been based on the idea of a static and exotic culture, for example, the fashion for Chinoiserie, while now the rise of China in the global arena threatens the West’s belief in its natural dominance. The specific and deliberate targets of the West on the issues of Chinese frontiers and ethnic minorities should not be regarded to be due to purely humanitarian concerns, scholarly traditions, and methodological entries, but also due to strong political and ideological agendas, stakes and calculations. Views on Chinese minorities in overseas societies, both in the West and beyond, have tended to assume that the powerful attraction of “being Chinese” was irresistible and that local Chinese have always been defined by their relationship with the motherland. In China, the belief in an all-embracing Han civilization has been basic to the consolidation of the state and the absorption of the minorities and frontier peoples. But China’s

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participation in the international arena, and her complex relationship with overseas Chinese and residual China has created the necessity to think in a more nuanced way about Chinese identity, creating more space for plural interpretations, and mutable variations. This critique, which may be controversial, highlights the structural difference of how the West and China organize their societies and governments, and manage state-society relationships culturally as well as institutionally. The case of Chineseness offers us the chance to explore the tension between essentialist and constructivist views of identity.

Chineseness is both an old and a new term to signify the identity of “being Chinese”. Although the term has been around for a long time, it is only two decades ago that the term started to become popular among overseas scholarship on China and the Chinese. The Chineseness discourse is, first of all, not specifically a Chinese phenomenon, but belongs to a wider global post-modern culturalist project on identity politics. There have been big debates on whiteness, such as Americanness, Britishness, Dutchness, Frenchness, and the like. Together with whiteness, Chineseness shares a common theoretical relevance and intellectual foundation. All the controversial viewpoints and methodological innovations and dilemmas for the whiteness study, to some extent, can be also applied to the Chineseness discourse. But unlike the Chineseness discourse, the whiteness study is a relatively mature field of research with over a century history so that it is in its “third wave”. Against the background of essentialized race politics, the whiteness study has its origin and base in the USA by a black scholar W. E. B. DuBois, before moving to the European immigrants and descendants, and recently the attention shifted to the post-1965 migrant communities of the Caribbean, Latin America, Mexico, and other nations from Europe.² Like Chineseness, whiteness is hybrid, multiple, and hierarchical. In early modern America from the 1640s to the 1850s, for example, cultural dimensions and assimilations became significant in the social landscape when various political transfers took place from one European power to another.³ In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Britishness was pervasively identified, imaged, and embraced as a worldwide geopolitical and capitalist function

² For some excellent review articles, see Peter Jackson, “Constructions of 'Whiteness' in the Geographical Imagination”, *Area*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (June, 1998), pp. 99-106; France Winddance Twine and Charles Gallagher, “Introduction. The future of whiteness: a map of the ‘third wave’”, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 1 (January 2008), pp.4-24; Alastair Bonnett, “Review article: White Studies revisited”, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 1 (January 2008), pp.185-196.

³ Jack P. Greene, “The Cultural Dimensions of Political Transfers: An Aspect of the European Occupation of the Americas”, *Early American Studies*, Vol.6, No.1 (Spring 2008), pp.1-26.

by a large number of European-descended Australians and Canadians, yet the consciousness of difference or separation obviously existed and had developed.⁴ As for Dutchness in the Netherlands, there is a clear distinction between genealogical belonging (*autochtoon*) and acquired belonging (*allochtoon*), or the “real” Dutch and the “not-quite” Dutch”.⁵ However, overall, whiteness is essentially a privileged identity, no matter how it is distinguished, whether by Americanness, Britishness, Dutchness, Frenchness, Irishness, or in terms of political asset, economic merit, and cultural advantage. That is another marked reference point to distinguish the whiteness debate from the Chineseness discourse.

Concept and Conception

As a concept, Chineseness is often used and critiqued, but seldom defined. Its definition is not definite nor fixed, but rather selective and dynamic, differentiated among disciplinary approaches with changes in line with time, place and context.

For anthropologists two generations ago, as Clayton observes, Chineseness is conceptualized:

As a set of cultural values and practices that structured the institutions of family, village, nation, and state and distinguished them as essentially Chinese. This approach mirrored Confucian ideologies in which being Chinese meant being part of a cosmological entity, *tianxia*, which encompassed the social, political, and moral order and was given unity by a singular state headed by the Son of Heaven.⁶

This is why anthropologist Siu claims that ‘Chineseness’ is not an immutable set of beliefs and practices, but a process which captures a wide range of emotions and states of being. It is a civilization, a place, a polity, a history, and a people who acquire identities through association with these characteristics”.⁷ For a student of political science and law, the Singaporean nation-

⁴ Kosmas Tsokhas, “Tradition, fantasy and Britishness: Four Australian prime ministers”, *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, Vol.31, No.1 (2001), pp. 3-30; Kurt Korneski, “Britishness, Canadianness, Class, and Race: Winnipeg and the British World, 1880s-1910s”, *Journal of Canadian Studies*, Vol.41, No.2 (Spring 2007), pp.161-184.

⁵ Philomena Essed and Sandra Trienekens, “‘Who wants to feel white?’ Race, Dutch culture and contested identities”, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 1 (January 2008), pp.52-72.

⁶ Cathryn H. Clayton, *Sovereignty at the edge : Macau & the question of Chineseness*, Cambridge: the Harvard University Asia Center, 2009, p.16.

⁷ Helen F. Siu, “Cultural Identity and the Politics of Difference,” *Daedalus*, Vol. 122, No. 2 (Spring 1993), p.19.

building example illustrates how the post-independent Singaporean management of Chineseness has been historically elaborated and divided into three phases of “de-Chineseness” from 1965-1979; of “tentative higher profile for Chineseness” from 1979 to 1990, and of “reassertion of Chineseness” from 1990 to the present.⁸ Given Singapore’s unique Chinese-dominant and multi-cultural and multi-ethnic social structure, Chineseness is well-defined as a top-down state initiative:

‘Chineseness’ refers to the Singaporean perspective of the political elites placing increasing importance and prominence - in form, if not in substance - on Chinese language and culture within the political and socio-cultural discourse. Chineseness embodies an ethnic Chinese racial-cultural identity and value system that is being moulded as transnational, especially economic, processes bring Chinese-Singaporeans into contact with mainland Chinese and the Chinese diaspora. It is identified by the close relationship, on both economic and other fronts, between Singapore and China, facilitated by the belief that co-ethnics’ transnational transactions are exclusively advantaged and that China is the cultural motherland of the Chinese-Singaporeans. The overall manifestation is one of the ethnic Chinese-Singaporean nation-space gradually increasing within the political-ideological terrain which is, in turn, cross-mapped on to the patent need for Singapore to retain economic and cultural relevancy vis-a-vis China.⁹

Chineseness conceptualizes what are seen as fundamental and peculiar Chinese cultural attributes and core values under one common umbrella of “China” and one common label of “Chinese”, which transcend the scales of time and space in history. It is an invention which creates a uniform “China” and “the Chinese” despite changing situations, globally, regionally and nationally. Currently, Chineseness captures the momentum of the global imagining of transnational identity and the rise of China as a global power.

In Chinese, Chineseness literally refers to *Huaren Xing* by highlighting Chinese ethnicity, or *Minzu Xing* by emphasizing Han Chinese nationality, or *Guoming Xing* by concentrating on the Chinese people, or *Zhongguo Xing* by focusing on the Chinese polity, or *Zhonghua Xing* by capturing the Chinese civilization. In fact, to most Chinese people, the term “Chineseness” is

⁸ Eugene K.B. Tan, “Re-engaging Chineseness: Political, Economic and Cultural Imperatives of Nation-building in Singapore”, *The China Quarterly*, No.175 (September 2003), pp.751-774.

⁹ Eugene Tan, 2003, pp.751-752.

unfamiliar so that they would have to take quite some time to figure out what it really means. Similar difficulties are often encountered when referring to the familiar term “Chinese”. It seems that this puzzle is NOT between words in different contexts, but between a very concrete idea of “Chinese”, familiar to everyone, and the more abstract idea of a cultural quality, which is not necessarily based on a concrete and clearly defined and unchanging essential entity that is familiar in the west and newer in China. The latter refers to developments in the West on the ideas of changing, complex and constructed identities shaped by cosmopolitanism, which have only recently become relevant in China, and which reflects the reaction to the threats of globalization and immigration.

Chineseness is about China as a place, as a polity, and as a civilization. But beyond China, it is also about the Chinese. Chineseness is about the Chinese as a people, as a race, as a nation, as a language, as an ethnicity, culture, and identity. But beyond the Chinese, it also reverts to being about China. Chineseness is about history, not only Chinese history, but it involves both Chinese history and non-Chinese history, and the genealogy of its very discourse as well. It especially concerns the constellations between China and the West on the one hand and China and its neighbors on the other. Hence, it is about self and otherness. Furthermore, Chineseness is a social construct, where identity is shaped by unique social and historical experiences – the geobody of Chinese localities and the bio-body of Chinese personality. This is especially applicable to the local level of various geo-political bodies of Hong Kong, Taiwan and Macau and other ethnic Chinese minorities overseas as well as frontier territories. Chineseness has to be understood as part of Chinese studies as a field and as a discipline, but it has also served to deconstruct Chinese studies, moving it in new directions and new terrains, and to involve its relationship with non-Chinese studies too. Chineseness is also an intellectual attempt to replace old stereotypical approaches to China, providing opportunities for cross-disciplinary perspectives and fresh imaginings. Therefore, the Chineseness discourse must confront the correlated and intertwined linkages of China and the Chinese, China and non-China, Chinese and non-Chinese, Chinese studies and non-China studies, and Chinese history and non-Chinese history.

Having said all this, it should be noted that Chineseness is neither just about China, nor about the Chinese. It is not even about the simple combination of China and the Chinese together. Beyond China and the Chinese, it also focuses on otherness, the otherness that fundamentally shapes the

Chineseness discourse. For outsiders, and especially for Westerners, Chineseness involves exploring “modernity”, while avoiding the assumption that western modernity is the sole and dominant model. Chineseness can suggest another path or alternative model and as such it is closely implicated with the West’s anxieties about their impending loss of domination and the consequences of Chinese on-going ascendancy. Moreover, Chineseness can take refuge under the intermediate umbrella of “Asia” and “Asianness”, dissociating itself from both the West and China as well. Taiwan, for example, has used Asia and Asianness to detach itself from China and move into international space, while it enables Singapore to claim its own identity as distinct from the West. Both claim that they retain the culture of their country of origin but they are unique. While during the period of colonialism and imperialism, the contemporary umbrella of Asia and Asianness was manifested in the political and ideological form, such as Asianism and nationalism. The ways in which an all-embracing Asia and Asianness shape the dynamics of the Chineseness discourse deserves further exploration.

The Chineseness discourse may be best answered by a couple of simple questions, such as what Chineseness, whose Chineseness,¹⁰ how Chineseness, and why Chineseness?¹¹ It could be best understood through a cluster of sharp dichotomies, such as Han-Chinese and non-Han Chinese, China and residue China, inside China and outside China, self and other, insider and outsider, center and periphery, individual and community, personal and institutional, state and society, national and transnational, local and global, tradition and modernity, continuity and change, subjectivity and objectivity, imposition and choice, unifying and differentiating, binding and unbinding, modern and post-modern, colonial and post-colonial, top-down and bottom-up, Sinology and Chinese studies, Chinese studies and non-Chinese studies, and so on and so forth. Different actors and watchers have different agendas and perspectives, perceptions interpretations, and implications. Chineseness may be best described through any specific individual, communal, local, national, and even transnational empirical case study. Such diversified stories from below and from the margin would certainly enrich our understanding of what Chineseness really means.

¹⁰ Siao See Teng, “What ‘Chineseness’, Whose ‘Chineseness’?: A Preliminary Assessment of ‘Sinicisation’ in the Discussion of Culture and Ethnicity in Postcolonial Singapore”, *The Essex Graduate Journal*, 2005 (5).

¹¹ Ien Ang, “Can One Say No to Chineseness? Pushing the Limits of the Diasporic Paradigm”, *Boundary 2*, Vol.25, No.3 (Fall 1998), p.227.

But in turn, by the very effort, it would be dangerous to structure and essentialize Chineseness without taking into account factors emanating from above and from the center. Moreover, any attempt of compartmentalizing the Chineseness discourse within one specific narrow niche, without setting it into wider contexts, processes, structures, and relationships, would be one-sided, and misleading. On the other hand, this broad contextualization must be focused on clear and grounded case-studies, otherwise the complex interplay of different factors operating at various levels will be too confusing. At critical and historic junctures, in China and beyond on the globe, the Chineseness discourse always aims to answer the same, simple, yet fundamental and essential questions: What is China, who are the Chinese? How and why should China move forward? And what does being Chinese mean after such change? In the final analysis, Chineseness aims to conceptualize the making of China and the Chinese as a body, as an identity, and as a modernity.

Constellation and Contestation

Chineseness is often taken for granted as a contingent device for analysis, but the reasons for its application and the ways it is used are seldom made explicit. Its uses are often specifically linked to particular contexts, such as the “notion of Chineseness,” “meaning of Chineseness,” “paradigms of Chineseness,” “identity of Chineseness,” “signifier of Chineseness,” “maker of Chineseness,” “analysis of Chineseness,” “performing Chineseness,” “categorizing Chineseness,” and the like. As a contingent device, Chineseness is practical, analytical, distinguishable, fluid, and fashionable, representing a new China, a new Chinese, and a new civic relationship under a new changing global situation as well as changing academic fashions. Sometimes, it is everything, but also nothing, exactly because it is too ambiguous, abstract, complicated, and essentialized, as some scholars have argued. Of course, it does not deny the connection between “essential” identity on the one hand and “contingent, instrumental, constructed” identity on the other and it is nonetheless relevant in its specifically Chinese applications.

Chineseness scholarship usually highlights the multi-dimensional meanings and implications featured by different approaches, angles, and aspects. They are often centered on thematic articulations - of minority, marginality, periphery, and edge; of borders, boundaries, and frontiers;

of in-between, interstices, and transnationality; of fluidity, plurality, multiplicity, mobility, and hybridity; of flow, movement, and migration; of diaspora, distance, dislocation, and displacement; of discrimination, exclusion, denial, and rejection; of resistance, rescue, re-articulation, and re-negotiation; of strangers, aliens, intruders, and outsiders, and so on and so forth. Among these various focal points of actors, arenas, places, and agencies, research emphasis has been also paid to the exploration and elaboration of relationships, interactions, and interconnections. Whatever it is, in search of modernity in a global era, they all involve one fundamental research agenda of decentering hegemony and ideology, of decentering nation-state, and even of decentering the otherness. They all essentially concern one pair theme of the sameness and the otherness, hence involving ethnicity, culture, and identity. Therefore, in terms of discipline and field, Chineseness scholarship has been cross-fertilized, going beyond two traditional domains of China Studies and Overseas Chinese Studies, and enriched by engaging many scholars from other fields and disciplines.

The Chineseness discourse is sometimes politicized and ideological, involving China's external relations, internal cross-straits politics, and the domestic agendas of the foreign countries concerned. In this sense, Chineseness is engaged as an identity and a story that is connected to and simultaneously differentiated from "China" as a polity and "Chinese" as a civilization. In contrast, Chineseness is also deliberately embraced as a kind of replacement, and an emotional enthusiasm, to depoliticize and differentiate "political China" as a regime, ideology, and identity. Or, it is a form of "cultural politics" by admitting culture as an inseparable bond to engage cross-straits relationship, and by using culture to depoliticize the idea of China, namely as an "ancient civilization" and not a "rising super-power", but "peaceful development" and a "harmonious society" to engage world power politics. In this regard, for the outsider and the periphery, Chineseness as belonging is to be detached from the Chinese state.¹² But it is also to engage Chinese people, culture, history and civilization. In the case of Taiwan, for instance, Chineseness is about the difference of culture and identity to justify its political quest. But on the other hand, the same discourse is also used to support its claims on the orthodox versus current Chinese culture, on political legitimacy, and on any potential benefits deriving from those connections.

¹² Anthony Reid, "Introduction: Chineseness Unbound", *Asian Ethnicity*, Vol.10, No.3 (October 2009), pp.197-200.

Four levels of structural factors are fundamental in shaping the Chineseness discourse: first, Mainland China; second, Residual China of Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan; third, ethnic Chinese communities overseas; and fourth, the international community, predominantly of the West and China's Asian neighbors. At the first level, it is about triple relationships of tradition and change, center and periphery, and internalization and externalization. At the second level, it is about dual relationships of center and periphery between Mainland China and Residual China and of their own interactions with the global capitalist modernity. At the third level, it is about relationship between the cultural linkages with China and political identity with host states. At the fourth level, it is about relationship of world politics in general and the Sino-Western constellation in particular. For the Chineseness debate, all these four structural levels form the contested sites of objectivity as well as subjectivity. The time and circumstances for the discourse are usually the historic junctures of political, economic, ideological and social changes, internationally as well as domestically. The discourse of Chineseness can switch between China-focused as defined by grand narratives and world politics from above and Chinese-focused as defined by local experiences and individual stories from below. The choice of the switch depends on the circumstances of subjective positioning, mediating, and reference.

Chineseness is a post-modern intellectual inquiry of characterizing, categorizing, essentializing, mapping, constructing and deconstructing both China's identity in the world and Chinese belongings in their respective spatial and cultural worlds. It is both an internationalized scholarly inquiry and popular fantasy, which has developed in new changing circumstances in contrast to the previous stereotyped representation of "China" and the "Chinese", liberating discourse from these constraints and adding a new dimension of "global China" and "transnational Chinese".¹³ Paradoxically, the Chineseness discourse concerns non-China and the "residual China", consisting of Taiwan, Hong Kong, Macau and Overseas Chinese communities, more than Mainland China. For ordinary people within Mainland China, it is a very new term indeed. Unlike Chinese Overseas, they are not labeled "displaced" and "marginal", except for the non-Han Chinese perhaps. For Chinese overseas especially, the idea of Chineseness is an inescapable aspect of everyday reality and consciousness. For "residual China", Chineseness is a contested, regularly reinvented to express both the connections and the difference between China as a polity

¹³ Chu Yiu-Wai, "The Importance of Being Chinese: Orientalism Reconfigured in the Age of Global Modernity", *Boundary 2*, Vol.35, No.2, Summer 2008), pp.183-206.

and regime on the one hand and China as a place, race, and civilization on the other. It is contested, not only as to “authenticity” and “inauthenticity,” but also with regard to sameness and uniqueness.

Past and Present

Chineseness has essentially been shaped by the otherness. The non-Han Chinese minorities, the Chinese overseas communities, the West and beyond, are structured forces of the otherness, typically identified as periphery and outsider within and without the boundary of the nation-state. Chineseness is initially a construction by the non-Chinese others, a reference to the displaced Chinese Overseas, and a reflection by the Mainland Chinese. In other words, both China and the Chinese have been passive subjects. However, the key issue is that China’s legitimate and hegemonic monopoly of the definition of “being Chinese”, regardless of how others feel, agreement or disagreement, or self-identification or otherwise, was dominant in Chinese circles both at home and abroad. This so-called hegemonic center of ancestral origin and rootedness¹⁴ is controversial, prompting a number of diasporic Chinese scholars - such as Tu Weiming, Ien Ang, Allen Chun and Rey Chow, to mention a few - to challenge and deconstruct it.

In the pre-modern period, it is the non-Han Chinese minorities in the periphery, namely the so-called “barbarians,” who shaped Chineseness as a sinic-centred consciousness and world order. In the modern period from the 1840s onwards, it is the West that decentered China, rejecting the sinic-centered world view, and redefined Chineseness as contained within the nation-state. It is during this period when the idea of “modern ‘Chineseness’ perhaps originated, not spontaneously from the Chinese own cultural tradition but rather from external contact with the Western culture”.¹⁵ In the contemporary period, it is the “residual China”, another kind of “Chinese periphery” who dominate the international discourse on Chineseness, while the Maoist conception of Chineseness emphasizes “uniformity, homogeneity and conformity,” or “national-popular” to borrow from Anbin Shi. Subsequently, after a transitional period of Maoism and

¹⁴ Frank N. Pieke, "The Genealogical Mentality in Modern China," *Journal of Asian Studies* 62, no. 2 (2003).

¹⁵ Ching-I Tu, “Brief Discussion of the Past and Present Study of the Issue ‘Chineseness’”, *Taiwan Journal of East Asian Studies*, Vol.4, No.1 (June 2007), p.155.

Cold War ideology, it is globalization and global China that reshaped Chineseness as ethnicity, culture and identity as a postcolonial and postmodern construction.¹⁶

China and the Chinese are no longer as the passive and silent other as before, the West and beyond conversely have in turn become “the other” for China and diasporic Chinese. But the process of contemporary China’s awareness of and engagement in the Chineseness discourse takes time and depends on China’s shifting domestic agenda and China’s changing position in the world. With China’s take-off from the 1990s, China’s scholarly community has systematically translated various western works on China for the construction of China’s image. While following China’s rapid transformation in one decade after joining the WTO, the issue of promoting China’s new image to the outside world by China itself has become more and more important. One of fundamental considerations behind such a shift is not only because of China’s socio-economic progress and confidence, but also because of the misunderstanding of China from the outside world. China would very much like to exhibit a new, progressive, and diversified “Chineseness” to the world.

Three examples suffice. The first example is a series of recent Chinese scholarly publications on China’s images in various foreign countries and regions. The second is the establishment of Confucian Institutes overseas. From 2004 onwards, the historical Chinese saint Confucius has been selected as a contemporary Chinese cultural ambassador to the world. Sponsored by the Chinese government and jointly established by Chinese universities and their counterparts overseas, at least 357 Confucian Institutes have been set up in more than 100 countries and regions in order to promote Chinese languages and cultures.¹⁷ The third is the visual advertisement of China’s image to the outside world in order to disseminate a new China image. It is sponsored by the Chinese central government, but produced by the commercial media corporation, consisting two parts. Part one is a people-focused advertisement highlighting 59 Chinese personalities, lasting 60 seconds, shown in the New York Times Plaza for one-month from 17 January 2011. Part two is society-focused, highlighting 800 pictures of diversified Chinese societies. In this, “Chineseness” is mainly interpreted as “China’s image”, which is

¹⁶ David Yen-ho Wu, 1991, pp.159-179; Anbin Shi, “Mediating Chinese-ness: Identity Politics and Media Culture in Contemporary China”, in *Negotiating Asymmetry. China’s Place in Asia*, eds., Anthony Reid and Zheng Yangwen, Singapore: NUS Press, 2009, pp.192-213.

¹⁷ *The People’s Daily* (Overseas Edition), 28 November 2011.

constructed by and manifested in the various great achievements over past decades and in the life documentations of various Chinese personalities and societies. Therefore, Chineseness is equal to China's image. In the global context, the construction and interpretation of China's image is either people-focused or society-focused, rather than state-centred and ideology-dominated, although it is an initiative of the Chinese government. Interestingly, the 59 selected Chinese personalities are predominantly elite, with most of them holding either foreign citizenship or permanent residence status. It suggests that for China, it is ethnicity rather than citizenship that determines the process behind the contemporary China image construction. It conveys a rather simple and clear message to the world: that China is rapidly changing, that the Chinese people are always friendly, peaceful, harmonious, and diversified, and that both are eager to better understand the world and to be better understood by the world.¹⁸

China's promotion of a new "Chineseness" is of course targeted at diasporic Chinese communities. But, conversely, China turns out, consciously or unconsciously, "the other" for diasporic Chinese, some of them resisting and challenging the hegemonic Chineseness discourse from China and the West as well. Such in-between deconstructive agenda and mentality are exemplified by the essays of expatriate Chinese scholars, such as Allen Chun, Rey Chow and Ien Ang.¹⁹ Moreover, to this an extra important dimension is added, that is the intermediate domain and terrain of inter-connected Asia, where China is located and many Overseas Chinese settled. Unlike the previous binary dichotomy in shaping the Chineseness discourse, Asia and Asian connections would certainly add a new significant dimension to the multiple Chineseness discourse as a realistic dynamic.

¹⁸ http://news.xinhuanet.com/politics/2011-01/22/c_13702349.htm, http://news.xinhuanet.com/world/2011-01/25/c_121021955.htm, http://news.xinhuanet.com/world/2011-02/10/c_13726405.htm

¹⁹ Allen Chun, "Fuck Chineseness: On the Ambiguities of Ethnicity as Culture as Identity", *Boundary 2*, Vol.23, No.2 (Summer 1996), pp.111-138; Rey Chow, "Can One Say No to China"? *New Literary History*, Vol.28, No.1 (Winter 1997), pp.147-151"; Rey Chow, "Introduction: On Chineseness as a Theoretical Problem", *Boundary 2*, Vol.25, No.3 (Autumn 1998), pp.1-24; Ien Ang, "Can One Say No to Chineseness? Pushing the Limits of the Diasporic Paradigm", *Boundary 2*, Vol.25, No.3 (Autumn 1998), pp.223-242.

Perception and Representation

Various logos for China's representative images are often used as metaphors to engage the Chineseness discourse, such as dragon, lion, panda, and Great Wall. The Orient, Confucianism, Chinese *Gongfu* and Chinese calligraphy also serve as resources of exotic cultural fantasy. Various internationally acclaimed contemporary Chinese personalities such as musical artists Ma Yo-yo and Lang Lang, sport athletes Yaoming and Liu Xiang, or Li Na and Ding Junhui, film actor Jack Chen and actresses Gong Li and Zhang Ziyi, film directors Zhang Yimou and Chen Kaige, and the like, are often used to feature modern Chineseness.

But, there are many other negative metaphors and images to exemplify Chineseness, of which men's pigtails, women's foot-binding, polygamy, gambling, opium-addiction, secret societies, and prostitution are other examples in history. Historically, the perception and representation of immigrant Chinese in the West has usually been negative and discriminative, while relatively those in Nanyang were favourable.

Chinese are imagined and categorized comparatively by reference to other non-western ethnic minorities such as the Jews in Europe (for diasporic Chinese in general, and for Chinese entrepreneurs in Nanyang in particular), Negroes from Africa (for the Chinese in the USA), Indians from South Asia (as coolies), and yellow peril (together with Japanese in colonial times). For their historical and socio-economic positions in relation to their host societies, the Chinese were typically characterized as "pseudo-bachelor men" overall, "middlemen" in Nanyang, and "underclass" in the USA. Although sometimes imaged as an exotic myth and "model" of the otherness, the Chinese were typically and discriminatively caricatured by the Western media as John Chinaman, or the so-called "Chinaman". Relevant to that negative image were Chinatowns in terms of residence landscape, *chopsuey* in terms of food culture, and gold-rushers, railway constructors and laundrymen in terms of economic life. While in Nanyang, Chinese *towkays* was the popular term to address Chinese businessmen, among whom were tin-miners, rubber-planters, and shop-keepers etc. Chinaman in the English media and publications in the Nanyang was a neutral term, without strong sentiments of ethnic discrimination and exclusion as in the West. Unlike Chinatowns in the West, in contrast the Chinese were the most important pioneers in Southeast Asian urbanization and therefore they used to be the majority residents in the various

main and middle-sized Southeast Asian cities and towns. In comparison with the host society, Chinese economic activities were fundamental and indispensable, involving almost every sector.

Various self-perceptions and differentiated categories among overseas Chinese communities are also very important for better understanding the Chineseness discourse. Chinese themselves used to be self-addressed as “*Tangren*” probably because China was metaphored as “*Tangshan*”. While for the native Chinese in *Qiaoxiang* of Fujian province, Overseas Chinese were usually called “*Fanke*,” literally meaning migrants to foreign countries. Internally, Chinese themselves were categorized in line with the distinction between “*Peranakan Chinese*” and “*Sinkeh Chinese*” in Nanyang, or between Banana Chinese and new Chinese immigrants (in the West), or between first generation and second (and beyond) generation of migrants. Moreover, in the larger context at the national, regional and global levels, the passage of time played its part in shaping the trajectory of identity construction, hence differentiating Chineseness fundamentally. The Chinese were also usually identified in line with their place of origin, which usually corresponds with dialect groups, such as the two main *Qiaoxiang* of Fujian and Guangdong at the provincial level and five speech groups of Hokkien, Cantonese, Teochew, Hakka, and Hainanese. As Wang Gungwu observes, “They accepted being called Chinese by other communities, but were more concerned with their identities as members of certain villages, lineages, ritual centres, counties or language groups, or of certain trades and occupations. It was only after the rise of modern nationalism that an awareness of China emerged”.²⁰ Last but not least, the Chinese were identified in line with destination locations, such as the names of region, country, and city, which shaped different images and perceptions of Chineseness due to different circumstances.

China’s own categorization of immigrant Chinese has experienced substantial shifts. In premodern times, there were the negative images of the “overseas orphans”, “the deserted”, “the exiles”, “the smugglers”, “the pirates”, and even “the traitors”. In modern times after 1870s, China’s perception of immigrant Chinese started to be positive and immigrant Chinese were overall termed elegantly as “*Huaqiao*”, literally “the Sojourners”, or they were usually called “identity for immigrant Chinese as Overseas Chinese”. This is because the Overseas Chinese started to be regarded as a dynamic force and were incorporated into the cause of Chinese modernization and revolution. The Overseas Chinese were universally imagined and categorized

²⁰ Wang Gungwu, “Chinese History Paradigms”, *Asian Ethnicity*, Vol. 10, No.3 (October 2009), p.202.

as “*Huagong*”, literally Chinese coolies, and “*Huashang*”, literally “Overseas Chinese merchants”, or they were locally addressed as “Chinese *towkays*”. Such images were popularized and peaked during the decades between World War One and World War Two. Up to this point, Chineseness had been identified and oriented by the very place, nation, and state of China. This can be verified and consolidated by the automatically and universally granted Chinese political “Chinese subjects”.²¹

However, the China-oriented identity was seriously contested in the 1950s because of the decolonization and nation-building process, and the Cold War ideology when the CCP took over power from the KMT. The China-oriented “Overseas Chinese” began to be constructed into the indigenous-oriented term of “Chinese Overseas”. Such a shift was politically driven, deliberately opted for, and culturally contested over several decades. The making of Chinese Overseas coincided with the ideological confrontation, with Communist China in decline while the Four Little Asian Dragons prospered. In that process, “residual China” formed the driving force of East Asian capitalism. This was the justification behind Tu Wei-ming’s urge to use the term “Cultural China”. However, it was not so long that the Cold War ended all of sudden followed by China’s economic take-off soon after Deng Xiaoping’s Southern Tour in 1992. Within less than two decades, China had become a world power in the ranks of the global international community. The political term “Chinese Overseas” was not as sensitive as before as the need for a deliberate reiteration of the political identity receded. The de-politicalized term Chinese diaspora became popular. But the term diaspora is not specifically confined to immigrant Chinese as it was first used to refer to Greeks, Armenians, and Jews, and subsequently to other migrant minorities of Italian, Irish, Indian, Korean etc. Thus, it cannot be used in the current momentum of “global China” and of “transnational Chinese” in our globalizing world. Hence, I believe the term “Chineseness” has become popular, while encompassing many key concepts of diaspora, transnationalism, ethnicity, culture and identity, and so on.

²¹ Yen Ching-Hwang, “Ch’ing Changing Images of the Overseas Chinese (1644-1912)”, *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol.15, No.2 (1981), pp.261-285.

Paradigms and Approaches

Various definitions of “Chineseness” are usually correlated to and intertwined with different paradigms and approaches. Therefore, let me start by introducing several sample definitions before coming to the debates on paradigms and approaches. Literature on the Chineseness discourse can be divided into two categories. The China-focused literature is that of predominantly the West first, to which China itself responds, and that Residual China mediates in between Mainland China and outside world. The Chinese-focused literature is that of predominantly Western popular media and diasporic Chinese to which domestic Chinese self-reflects before responding to diasporic Chinese. It is a constellation, contestation, and even confrontation between China and the West, Mainland China and Residual China, domestic Chinese and diasporic Chinese.

American anthropologist Myron Cohen does not use the word “Chineseness” throughout his paper on “being Chinese”.²² It should not be read as Cohen’s conceptual neglect, if not his deliberate choice. In the context of current debates about identity, Chineseness is beyond “being Chinese” or “something Chinese”, and is rather conceptualized as representing fundamental and basic features that are related to all essential issues concerning “China” itself. It is a question of the gaze and showcase, representation and interpretation, invention, production, package, and commodification of “China” to the world.²³

Tu Wei-ming, a new Confucian scholar at Harvard, is perhaps the most well-known scholar in triggering and stimulating the Chineseness discourse, but Tu’s main concern is China-referred and China-focused, if not China-centred, the very object he intends to destruct. The term “Chineseness” is elaborated and wrapped under his mega-concept of “Cultural China”, but not defined. Therefore, Chineseness is constructed in relation to the prime concept of “Cultural China” and then differentiated into various categories defined by center-periphery dichotomy, namely the center of “China’s Chineseness”, and the peripheries of “Taiwan’s Chineseness”,

²² Myron L. Cohen, “Being Chinese: The Peripheralization of Traditional Identity”, *Daedalus*, Vol.120, No.2 (Spring 1991), pp.113-134. Interestingly, in the same issue of the same journal on the same subject, an expatriate Chinese scholar David Wu in contrast does use the term of Chineseness many times, see David Yen-ho Wu, “The Construction of Chinese and Non-Chinese Identities”, *Daedalus*, Vol.120, No.2 (Spring 1991), pp.159-179.

²³ Daniel Chirot and Anthony Reid, eds., *Essential Outsiders: Chinese and Jews in the Modern Transformation of Southeast Asia and Central Europe* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1997).

“Hong Kong’s Chineseness”, “Singapore’s Chineseness”, and other Chinesenesses of other Southeast Asian states and of other localities. Chineseness is therefore contested through the connections and interactions among these various cultural communities. While admitting that Chineseness is a kind of “Chinese cultural consciousness” which was occasioned by primordial ties defined in ethnic, territorial, linguistic, and ethnical-religious terms, Tu emphasizes the element of culture in featuring Chineseness. As a geopolitical and cultural construct, Chineseness is “defined” and referred and constructed in relation to culture and history, modernization and westernization.²⁴ “The center has the ability, insight, or legitimate authority to dictate the agenda for cultural China. On the contrary, the transformative potential of the periphery is so great that it seems inevitable that it will significantly shape the intellectual discourse on cultural China for years to come”.²⁵ Therefore, Tu posits the periphery as the center. Although Tu focuses on the “cultural” and urges for the de-centering of China by the periphery and de-politicalized China and Overseas Chinese by “Cultural China”, his intention is very much political, against the background of events recently in China, in June 1989. The paradox is that the rationale for his argument has changed tremendously long before China, the East Asian Overseas Chinese communities and Tu Weiming himself, were incorporated into China-centered intellectual activities.

In Tu’s essay, “Chineseness” is a marker of common culture and identity and therefore subjected to and highlighted by his motif concept of “Cultural China”. Although Tu’s aim is meant to rescue Chineseness from China, and “while the meaning of Chineseness is defined explicitly as fluid and changeable, the category of Chineseness itself is emphatically not in question,” to borrow Ang’s comment.²⁶ This is in fact the intellectual inquiry of cultural studies scholars such as Allen Chun, Ien Ang and Rey Chow. “Chineseness”, both as a category and as a notion, has now become their common motif and focus of interrogation and reflection. In their eyes, Chineseness is highly problematic and politically hegemonic, and scholars should resist and say “No” firmly to its use. For Allen Chun, Chineseness is not defined either, but deconstructed and interrogated in line with the ambiguities of ethnicity, culture, and identity. Exactly because of this, the notion of Chineseness is always multiple and fluid, differentiated as “*Hua* and *Xia*” in

²⁴ Tu Wei-ming, “Cultural China: The Periphery as the Center”, *Daedalus*, Vol.120, No.2 (Spring 1991), pp.1-32.

²⁵ Tu Wei-ming, 1991, pp.27-28.

²⁶ Ien Ang, 1998, p.231.

terms of culture and polity, “universal and particularistic” in terms of center and locality, “nationalist and communist” in terms of ideological conflict, and “material culture and ethnic consciousness”. In particular, Chun emphasizes the significance of the “historical”, the “local” and the “individual” as a process, a context and a body in shaping the notion of Chineseness.²⁷ He concludes by asking: “Is Chineseness important? How can one not give a fuck?”²⁸

For Wang Gungwu, doyen of scholarship on Chinese Overseas and Southeast Asian Studies, the conceptualization of Chineseness is a work in progress with the focus shifting from China-oriented to the Chinese people’s perspective. In the early 1980s, Wang’s conceptualization of Chineseness was China-focused and defined by China as a place, as a civilization, as a society, as a polity, as a historical experience, and as a dominant ideology, which was influenced by the elements from non-Han Chinese and the Western Powers.²⁹ For Wang, China-focused Chineseness is approached from two perspectives: the inside and the outside. From the inside, “the Chinese people may be expected to take their Chineseness for granted”, and the Chinese government “will find conscious discussion of Chineseness embarrassing unless it can define it to fit its present situation”. From the outside, Chineseness is defined as “the characteristics attributed to China”, which “are more elusive and any effort to outline them without reference to time and the processes of change before the modern era must be inadequate.”³⁰

Wang’s China-focused Chineseness conceptualization later shifted to the Chinese people’s perspective of what being Chinese means. In shaping Chinese identity, Wang has elaborated the specific “Chinese history paradigms.” The Chinese history paradigms influence the very idea of being Chinese, both inside and outside China. According to Wang’s definition,

Chinese history paradigms refer to the many ways the past is used to shape thought and action at all levels of Chinese life, including how parts of the past can be re-selected to justify either conservation or change. Such paradigms include packages of values and judgments that the Chinese past invokes, for example, models of good and bad lives, victors and losers in war and politics, literati duties and *baixing* (ordinary folk) expectations,

²⁷ Allen Chun, 1996, pp.111-138.

²⁸ Allen Chun, 1996, p.138.

²⁹ Wang Gungwu, *The Chineseness of China: Selected Essays*, Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1991, pp.1-7. The introduction to the book was first published as a chapter entitled “The Chineseness of China” in Brian Hook (ed.), *The Cambridge Encyclopaedia of China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), pp.31-34.

³⁰ Wang Gungwu, 1991, p.1.

judgments made by the civilized and the barbarian, and the norms that determined the directions of changes.³¹

The issue of Chineseness can be framed differently both inside and outside China, especially in terms of a dichotomy, binding and unbinding. While there has been an increasing binding force within China, as an outsider himself, Wang observes that it is a tendency that Chineseness is being unbounded among the elites of China, people in Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan, and especially Chinese Overseas in foreign nation-states. Although the nature and level of being unbounded is differentiated among these three categories of Chineseness, such ideas have become “much more open than it has ever been.”³² Wang argues that:

For the educated, locating their position in relation to the past livens up discussions of what being Chinese means. Episodes and images of Chinese history serve as landmarks in paradigms that are central to their self-recognition as Chinese. The paradigms provide patterns and sequences of thought that define what they share with other Chinese. They also delineate the boundaries near which the idea of Chineseness begins to blur. In that framework, the distance from Chinese history paradigms loosens the bonds with Chineseness. Similarly, the acceptance of other history paradigms helps Chinese to be unbounded.³³

For Chinese literature scholar Rey Chow, the contradiction is that Chineseness is a constructed ethnicity and identity, but “yet to be recognized in the ‘cultural studies’ relating to ‘China’”.³⁴ In interrogating the notion of Chineseness as a cultural essentialism and as a monolithic given, namely sino-centrism, Chow raises three important points for scholarly attention. First, there is a lack of attempts to “theorize Chineseness” as a theoretical issue. Second, there is a “sustained and conspicuous silence” in the field of China studies on “what it means for certain white scholars to expound so freely on the Chinese tradition, culture, language, history, women, and so forth in the postcolonial age”. And third, the otherness of Chineseness, namely Whiteness, “remains, as ever, exempt from interrogation”. “The theorization of Chineseness ... would be incomplete without a concurrent problematization of *whiteness* within the frameworks of China

³¹ Wang Gungu, “Chinese History Paradigms”, *Asian Ethnicity*, Vol.10, No.3 (October 2009), p.203.

³² Wang Gungwu, 2009, p.205.

³³ Wang Gungwu, 2009, pp.201-202.

³⁴ Rey Chow, “Can One Say No to China?” *New Literary History*, Vol.28, No.1 (Winter 1997), p.151.

and Asia studies".³⁵ Then, from the perspective of modern Chinese language and literature, Chow analyses the problematic that Chineseness has usually been equated to the "essentialized mandarine" in terms of language and the "essentialized ethnicity" in terms of literature. In Chow's edited special issue of *Boundary 2* dealing with Chineseness, however deconstructed and critiqued, none of contributors assumes that Chineseness is "simply empty or arbitrary". On the contrary, in order to unpack and reevaluate Chineseness, Chow concludes that a close study of texts and media is imperative and indispensable, asking a series of theoretical questions and giving a practical solution:

Chineseness can no longer be held as a monolithic given tied to the mythic homeland but must rather be understood as a provisional, "open signifier". Should we from now on simply speak of Chineseness in the plural--as so many kinds of Chineseness-es, so many Chinese identities? Should Chineseness from now on be understood not as a traceable origin but rather in terms of an ongoing history of dispersal, its reality always already displaced from what are imaginary, fantastic roots? As is evident in other intellectual movements, the course of progressivist antiessentialism comprises many surprising twists and turns, and the problem of Chineseness is, one suspects, not likely to be resolved simply by way of the act of pluralizing ... And it is at this juncture, when we realize that the poststructuralist theoretical move of splitting and multiplying a monolithic identity (such as China or Chinese) from within--powerful and necessary as it is--is by itself inadequate as a method of reading, that the careful study of texts and media becomes, once again, imperative, even as such study is now ineluctably refracted by the awareness of the unfinished and untotizable working of ethnicity. The study of specific texts and media, be they fictional, theoretical, or historical, is now indispensable precisely as a way of charting the myriad ascriptions of ethnicity, together with the cultural, political, and disciplinary purposes to which such ascriptions have typically been put.³⁶

Ien Ang, a cultural anthropologist, is certainly an influential critic on the Chineseness discourse. By making use of four Chinese expatriates' cultural encounters in the West (an Australian-born Chinese, an Indonesian-born Peranakan Chinese, a Taiwan-born Chinese, and a Mainland-born Chinese) and by engaging in a critique of Tu's Cultural Chinese paradigm, Ang argues that in the

³⁵ Rey Chow, 1998, pp.9-10. It should be noted that ten years later in the *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 1 (January 2008), there is a special issue on Whiteness edited by France Winddance Twine and Charles Gallagher. However, they are not included in the China and Asia Study as Chow suggested.

³⁶ Chow, 1998, p.24.

context of a diaspora, Chinese is a signifier of a discriminatory unchosen minority status, a category of a discursive construct and analysis, and a matter of identity politics of cultural difference. The quest for Chineseness by the Chinese diaspora is indeed one which involves the “otherness”, namely “whiteness”. In the context of Ang’s construction, it is clearly for Americanness, Australianess, Canadianness, and Europeanness. Therefore, the question is “not only, Can one say no to China? but also, Can one, when called for, say no to Chineseness”.³⁷ Some years later, Ang goes a step further and makes it clear that it is about “Together in-difference”, “beyond diaspora, into hybridity”.³⁸ “Indeed, the very category of Chineseness, and who can or should be included in this category, can be the object of intense contestation amongst and between these groups,”³⁹ she continues to point out.

If Ang’s choice of four individual cultural encounters is seen as a spicy plot into a bigger issue and a larger picture, then, the very methodological entry of the “Self” in the Chineseness discourse is empirically explored in depth for a thematic concern, which appears in a special issue of *Asian Studies Review* in 2006.⁴⁰ One common feature of Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan, and other Overseas Chinese communities is their “modern and capitalist Chineseness”. It is “essentially defined by a capitalist global way of functioning and a certain modernity”, “an anti-traditional Chineseness, as opposed to a Western imagery still often persuaded of the archaism of so-called Chinese norms”.⁴¹

Sinicization and Re-sinicization

Often related to the Chineseness discourse are the issues of sinicization, de-sinicization, and re-sinicization, a stereotyped term especially seen in this vibrant global world but frequently used by the international community. Sinicization usually refers to the long-term cultural assimilation of non-Han ethnic frontier minorities into the Han Chinese realm, and

³⁷ Ien Ang, 1998, p.242.

³⁸ Ien Ang, “Together-In-Difference: Beyond Diaspora, Into Hybridity”, *Asian Studies Review*, Vol.27, No.2 (June 2003), pp.141-154.

³⁹ Ien Ang, 2003, p.148.

⁴⁰ *Asian Studies Review*, Vol.30 (September 2006).

⁴¹ Thomas Fournel, “The identity of modern Chinese migrants from Hong Kong to Vancouver, Canada”, *Ekistics* 418/419 (January-April 2003), p.72.

comprises multifaceted dimensions, such as cultural, demographic, religious and social. According to Ho Ping-ti, “*Han-hua*”, the Chinese term for sinicization, “is not entirely correct; the truly correct Chinese term should be ‘*Hua-hua*’ because of the forces of sinicization which had begun to operate millennia before the Han dynasty came into being”.⁴² Depending on the circumstances, the mean, scale, and nature of sinicization can be coercive or peaceful, political or cultural, organized or voluntary, massive or minute. It is an endless historical process that can be implemented mutually on both sides, not only from centre to periphery, but also from periphery to centre. It takes place in two domains: within China’s territorial domain and beyond China’s sovereign domain. The former concerns the issues of Chinese ethnic frontier minorities, dynasty shifts, and state formation; the latter involves China’s neighboring countries, empire building, and international order. Sinicization often takes place in the sites of multi-ethnic interactions, such as frontiers and borders, at the junctures of great changes, such as wars and conquests, empire building and regime changes, internal migration and colonial rule. In particular, the sites and junctures of China’s frontiers and borders often coincided with those of China’s external interactions with neighboring countries and the West. Because of this, disruption and disconnection on the one hand, and engagement and connection on the other, often features the circumstances and the process of sinicization. In the final analysis, the dynamic power relations essentially concern Han Chinese and non-Han Chinese, central government and provincial frontiers on the one hand, and China and its neighboring countries and Overseas Chinese communities on the other. The process behind sinicization reflects the claims of Chinese local autonomy, sovereignty imposition, soft cultural power, and world order. Therefore, it is tricky that the sinicization discourse has in fact been associated with political and ideological agendas, rather than purely cultural contacts. Such is the context for the outsider’s claims of sinicization as instances of Chinese internal colonialism and external hegemony.

The correlation of Chineseness and sinicization lie in their genealogical relevance so that many scholars tend to capture the Chineseness discourse thematically, i.e. the processes of sinicization, de-sinicization, and re-sinicization. This especially refers to the critical junctures of political transfers and regime changes. Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macau are the

⁴² Ping-ti Ho, “In defense of sinicization: A rebuttal of Evelyn Rawski’s ‘Reenvisioning the Qing’”, *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol.57, No.1 (February 1998), p.152.

cases in point, where they have experienced Japanese colonialism, British colonialism and Portugal colonialism respectively, and political transfers subsequently. Therefore, at the junctures of political transfers, de-sinicization and re-sinicization have often occurred. As for regime changes, in the case of the DPP take-over from the KMT in Taiwan, and for the nation-building project in the case of Indonesia and Singapore, de-sinicization and re-sinicization have been characterized as major radically revised cultural policies. It is not a coincidence that when Chen Shuibian took office in the year 2000, observers immediately found that “Chineseness” in Taiwan became more complicated, not only involving the political controversy over Chineseness between mainland and Taiwan, but involving a new realistic force, the DPP regime.⁴³ Also, regarding the emergence of the “China-Wind” pop music in Taiwan and Hong Kong over last decade, Chineseness was engaged as a distant gaze, as an ambitious space and as an on-going struggle.⁴⁴

More interesting are the circumstances of the famous intellectual debate over sinicization between Rawski and Ho Ping-ti in the 1990s. Based on the recent literature from the non-Han Chinese language sources, Rawski challenged Ho Ping-ti’s sinicization thesis based on Qing history and argued that sinicization was “a twentieth century Han nationalist interpretation of Chinese past” in favour of empire-building without taking into account the non-Han Manchu-centered perspective. It is “a national-level narrative” without taking into consideration regional and local cultures in various periods.⁴⁵ In response, Ho Ping-ti argued that Rawski posits “a false dichotomy between being Manchu and becoming Chinese” and “fails to explain what the Manchu did and said they were doing in ruling most of China” and that “sinicization and empire-building were complementary rather than competitive forces”.⁴⁶ Ho stated that their difference lie in the methodology, in which Rawski’s article is mainly based on a “monothematic bibliographical survey”, while his own thesis is approached from a “macrohistorical perspective”.⁴⁷ But, it is fundamentally a disciplinary and ideological difference as he concluded by challenging Rawski’s “settling far too easily

⁴³ Arthur Waldron, “The ‘Chineseness’ of Taiwan”, *Policy Review*, 102 (August/September 2000), pp.27-39.

⁴⁴ Yiu Fai Chow & Jeroen de Kloet, “Blowing in the China Wind: Engagements with Chineseness in Hong Kong's *Zhongguofeng* Music Videos”, *Visual Anthropology*, Vol.24, Issue 1-2 (2010), pp.59-76.

⁴⁵ Evelyn S. Rawski, “Presidential address: Reenvisioning the Qing: The significance of the Qing period in Chinese history”, *The Journal of Asian Studies*; Vol. 55, No.4 (November 1996), p.842.

⁴⁶ Ping-ti Ho, 1998, pp. 125, 149.

⁴⁷ Ping-ti Ho, 1998, p.124.

and comfortably into the currently fashionable school of ‘cultural critics’ who mechanically substitute ideology for scholarship and historical version”.⁴⁸ If we go back nearly half century, coincidentally in the early 1960s, also in the *Journal of Asian Studies*, the similar fundamental intellectual disagreement can be found in the debate over the historian’s conventional skills and social science approach on the one hand, and over sinology’s conventional skills and social science-oriented Chinese studies.⁴⁹ We should bear in mind that such scholarly debate not only noted the decline of Sinology and the emergence of Chinese Studies, but also testified to the world power shift from Europe to the USA on the one hand, and regime change from the KMT to the CCP on the other. Therefore, the sinicization discourse reveals both how similar it is to the Chineseness discourse on the one hand, and how different it is from the Chineseness discourse on the other. It also helps explain how and why the Chineseness discourse has emerged in a timely fashion and become popular.

China Southern as Dynamics

Another important parameter for the Chineseness discourse is the factor of China Southern in shaping its dynamics. China Southern, rather than Southern China, is coined here based on the following considerations. First, it is a dichotomy not only between Northern and Southern, but also between Center and Periphery. The stereotypes are that Northern Chinese are usually tall, frank and straight, while Southern Chinese are small, subtle and sophisticated. Moreover, over centuries throughout Chinese ancient and medieval history, Southern China has always been a frontier and periphery, far away from the Northern political centre of China Proper, both geographically and economically. But it was just this periphery that later created the dynamics of the Chinese revolution and modernization by its massive overseas migrations, maritime trade and openness to the outside world. Second, China Southern indicates cross-border cultural linkages. The geographical components of

⁴⁸ Ping-ti Ho, 1998, p.152.

⁴⁹ Mary C. Wright, “Review: The Social Sciences and the Chinese Historical Record”, *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 20, No. 2, (February 1961), pp. 218-221; G. William Skinner, “What the Study of China Can Do for Social Science”? *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 23, No. 4, (August 1964), pp. 517-522; Maurice Freedman, “What Social Science Can Do for Chinese Studies”? *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 23, No. 4, (August 1964), pp. 523-529.

Southern China usually refer to the provinces of Fujian, Guangdong, Hainan, and Guangxi on the one hand, and Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan on the other. However, China Southern goes beyond such geographical boundaries, extending to China's Yunnan province, across the borderlands and South China Sea to various Chinese communities in Southeast Asia, and then to other Chinese communities further afield. Two core linkages of Chinese Overseas and global capitalism, connected by maritime trade and a chain of key transnational coastal port-cities, bind China Southern as a dynamic cultural and economic community. Such a cross-border cultural and economic community not only shaped the making of modern China, but also the making of the Chineseness discourse.

Another Kind of Chineseness

In addition to China Southern, at least several notable communities deserve special attention for the Chineseness discourse. First, the sizable number of Japanese war orphans who were brought up by their Chinese adoptive parents and spent decades in China. They are indeed very much Chinese in every sense. However, the contradiction is that they are Japanese-born, and later they left China, moved to and lived in Japan. They do not feel Japanese at all, neither were they regarded as such by their kin and other Japanese.⁵⁰ Second, the sizeable number of Chinese children adopted from various Chinese orphanages by Americans will grow up as part of their American families. They are Chinese-born, but have very little impression of China and Chinese culture. It is impossible for them to identify their blood parents and culturally they will turn out to be completely American.⁵¹ Third, stateless

⁵⁰ Rob Efield, "Distant Kin: Japan's 'War Orphans' and the Limits of Ethnicity", *Anthropological Quarterly*, Vol. 83, No.4 (Fall 2010),pp. 805-838; Tseng Wen-Shing, Keisuke Ebata et al., "Transethnic Adoption and Personality Traits: A Lesson from Japanese Orphans Returned from China to Japan", *The American Journal of Psychiatry*, Vol.147, No. 3 (March 1990),pp.330-335; Mariko Asano Tamanoi, "A Road to 'A Redeemed Mankind': The politics of memory among the former Japanese peasant settlers in Manchuria", *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, Vol.99, No.1 (Winter 2000), pp.163-189; Mariko Asano Tamanoi, *Memory Maps: the State and Manchuria in Postwar Japan*, Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2009.

⁵¹ Mary Beth Bruder, Carl J Dunst, Cristina Mogro-Wilson, "Child Factors Associated With Enrollment in Part C Early Intervention Among Children Adopted From China", *Journal of Early Intervention*, Vol.32, No.1 (December 2009), pp.54-67;Gloria Heyung Chun, *Of Orphans and Warriors: Inventing Chinese American Culture and Identity*, New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2000; Amy Traver, "(Ap)parent Boundaries: Parents' Boundary Work at Cultural Events for Families with Children Adopted from China", *Sociological Focus*,Vol.40, No.2 (May 2007),pp.221-241.

Chinese migrants pose another dilemma: What does Chineseness really mean to them? Fourth, nowadays transnationalism and familiarity with foreign cultures are surely regarded as a valuable asset, but we need to be aware that moving towards the acceptance of cosmopolitanism and transnationalism is a long and painful process. Just a few decades ago in China, western languages and foreign connections were labeled as something “bad, wrong, and evil”.

It is against these questions and this background that we must try to understand the position and dilemmas of a small number of pioneering and marginal Chinese transnational intellectuals, mostly schooled in or influenced by Western education and foreign cultures. More than a hundred years ago, for instance in the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, they confronted very powerful conservative and nationalist forces. Why did they return to China? What were their Chinese lives like? Did some of them leave China out of frustration? What can their historical experiences mean for the contemporary discourse of Chineseness? These questions should be carefully considered in terms of empirical case studies and taking a comparative and holistic perspective. In a word, the discourse on Chineseness deserves further serious scholarly inquiries going beyond the conventional ideological, territorial, and disciplinary boundaries.