A NORDIC JOURNAL ON ASIA BY EARLY CAREER RESEARCHERS

ASIA IN FOCUS

ISSUE 7

SUMMER 2019

ISSUE 7 · 2019

ASIA IN FOCUS

Asia in Focus is a peer-reviewed journal published online twice a year by NIAS - Nordic Institute of Asian Studies. NIAS is a Nordic research and service institute focusing on Asia's modern transformations. Asia in Focus was initiated by NIAS to provide Master students and PhD students affiliated to a Nordic institution a widely accessible and transnational forum to publish their findings. The focal point of the journal is modern Asian societies viewed from the standpoints of the social science and the humanities. The geographical focus is the Asian countries from Central Asia to Oceania excluding Australia and New Zealand.

Publisher NIAS - Nordic Institute of Asian Studies

Graphic Design Dennis Müller

Journal Website www.asiainfocus.dk

ISSN 2446-0001

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Contents

‘Joining the Club’ The place of a Chinese School in the global IR academy

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Since the 1970s, international relations (IR) as a discipline has been called an ‘American social science’. However, despite persistent criticism, Western-centrism still permeates the discipline today. In response, Chinese scholars are debating whether to create a Chinese IR theory, most recently in the form of a ‘Chinese School of IR’. This article focuses on the three main scholars in the debate – Qin Yaqing, Yan Xuetong and Zhao Tingyang – and their theories. Through a bibliometric study of IR periodicals published by Chinese institutions, the paper seeks to measure the influence of the new theories domestically and the Chinese School’s position in the global structure of IR knowledge production. Finally, it critically evaluates the theories’ relationship to existing Western-centric IR theory. All of this is done in order to assess whether Chinese IR theory can be considered a paradigm-shifting phenomenon. The article finds that Western-centric IR – both from an institutional and ideational perspective – continues to dominate the discipline. Furthermore, creating national schools in response to Western hegemony runs the risk of reproducing the problematic tropes of mainstream IR. China’s growing role in the world, its cultural and intellectual tradition, and its sheer proportion of the world population all speak in favour of its potential to emancipate global IR. However, in striving for a truly global discipline, scholars will need to adopt a critical stand against existing IR theory and seek a broader interpretation of what constitutes *China*.

Keywords: Western-centrism, Chinese School, international relations theory, global international relations, dialectics

Despite its name, the field of international relations has long been criticised for being parochial (Kristensen, 2015) and serving a Western outlook (Hobson, 2012) - it has even been called an 'American social science' (Hoffman, 1977; Smith, 2000). Critics claim that the field's universalisation of the Western experience has served to downplay the role of imperialism and colonialism. The discipline assumes an idealised world structured around arbitrary dates such as 1648, the Treaty of Westphalia, and the supposed foundation of the discipline in 1919 (Carvalho et al. 2011). The earlier roots of the discipline in fields such as racial science and colonial administration are ignored, as is the fact that one of the discipline's most trusted periodicals, *Foreign Affairs,* was founded in 1911 as *The Journal of Racial Development* (Vitalis, 2000).

With the emergence of critical, feminist and postcolonial IR studies, and the rise of developing non-Western countries such as the BRIC block, voices criticising subliminal Western-centrism in IR theory have grown more acute. The fact that these 'new' powers seemed to arise at the same time as the economies of established powers were floundering has reignited bouts of Western defeatism (Ferguson, 2011; Goldberg, 2018). Arguably, none of the newcomers spurs more attention, fascination or concern as China. A growing interest in China and its global vision carried popular titles as *What Does China Think* (Leonard, 2008) and *When China Rules the World* (Jacques, 2009). However, in the Western IR communities, rising powers continue to be studied mainly as objects rather than subjects able to 'speak' or theorise themselves (Kristensen, 2015).

A call for a *global* IR by concerned IR scholars Acharya and Buzan (2007) reenergised the debate for indigenous theory inside China. The potential for a *Chinese School* of IR inspired by the English and Copenhagen Schools has been a hotly debated topic for decades since Liang Shoude called for an "IR discipline with Chinese characteristics" (Liang, 1994). Recently, Chinese scholars have moved into a new phase formulating theories founded on Chinese history and philosophy (Qin, 2018; Zhang and Chang, 2016; Zhao, 2016; Yan, [2011] 2013). In this paper I discuss the potential for a Chinese School to challenge the Western-centric structure of IR both ideationally and from an institutional perspective by surveying more than 2,500 IR articles published from 2013-2017 in Chinese academic periodicals. In addition, I introduce a comparative angle as four periodicals are published in English and five in Chinese. The purpose is to investigate how much of the Chinese IR community is engaging in theory innovation, how much of this work promotes new theory based on Chinese resources, and how the new theories relate to existing IR and Western-centrism.

The stratified structure of the IR academy

Charges of Western-centrism in IR have taken different forms including institutional bias (Reingewertz and Lutwar, 2017), epistemological inflexibility (Brincat and Ling, 2014), cultural exceptionalism (Hobson, 2012), developmental determinism (Hoogvelt, 1997) and a lack of non-Western agency (Kayaoglu, 2010). An illustration of the stratified institutional structure of the IR community is the "hub-and-spokes system" (Kristensen, 2015) in which core scholars, largely made up by an Anglo-American institutional elite, dominate. As Kristensen puts it, "it is the privilege of 'core' scholars to theorise, while periphery scholars do not speak back to the core, except perhaps in the sense of providing some raw empirical materials." (Kristensen, 2015, p. 214).

Voices addressing these structural imbalances are either welcomed (Acharya, 2016) or met by resistance. Influential realist scholar John Mearsheimer portrays this exclusion in terms of scarcity: "[T]here are limited opportunities in 2015 for scholars outside the United States – as well inside it – to develop wholly new theories. If this were 1945, the situation would be markedly different" (Mearsheimer, 2016, p.2). There is a feeling in the more entrenched parts of the academy that IR is already overly fragmented (Wæver, 2013, p.336)

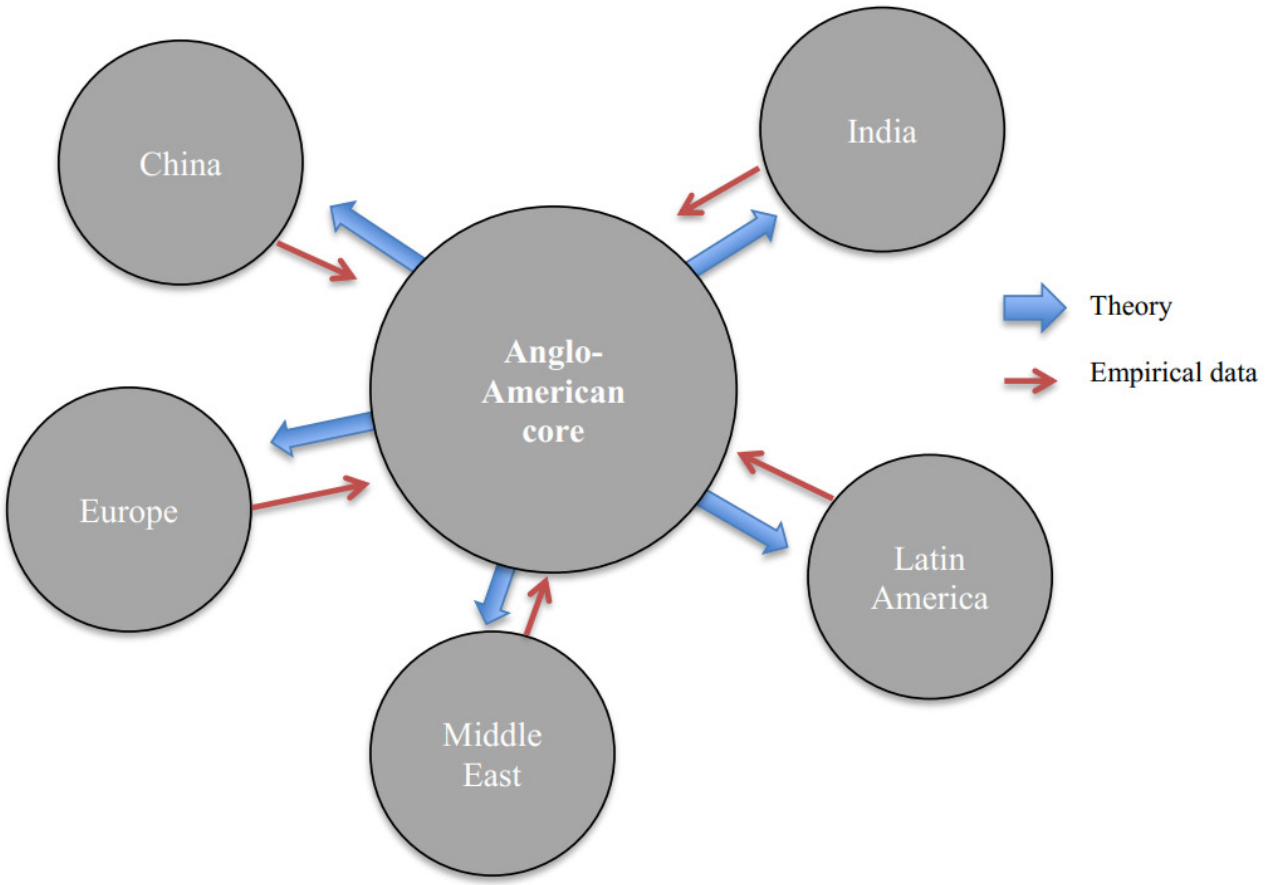

Figure 1. The stratified structure of knowledge production in the international IR community. The Anglo-American core of the global IR works as central disseminator of knowledge to the peripheral cores, which as subjugated entities are only conditionally able to 'speak back' mostly by providing 'raw, material data' to the 'theorising core'. There is little inter-peripheral contact.

and that it has reached its own end-of-history. That being the case, Chinese scholars are working to construct IR theories from Chinese resources either to contribute to existing research paradigms (Yan [2011] 2013) or as a new 'school of IR' (Zhang and Chang, 2016). Three of the main figures to emerge in the debate are Qin Yaqing, Yan Xuetong and Zhao Tingyang. The paper continues with a brief outline of the content of these scholars' theories, which is followed by the methodological approach of the survey. I then discuss how the sanctioned sources react to the existing mainstream theories.

Sanctioned sources of the Chinese School of IR

Although the debate around a Chinese School of IR has gained attention from a number of scholars, three scholars in particular have emerged as the main figures in the debate. I refer to their work as *sanctioned* partly because of their domestic status as eminent scholars that was revealed by surveying their Chinese peers (Kristensen, 2015, p.327) and partly because of their recognition globally as key representatives of a Chinese School. Qin, Yan, and Zhao have been called "main contributors" (Demir, 2018, p.96), "the three bigs of Chinese IR" (Babones, 2018) and "leading scholars" (Cunningham-Cross,

2014, p.6) by Western IR scholars. This is not to say that these particular scholars are necessarily ideal proponents of an imagined Chinese School, but they have become recognised as such by the core of the international IR academy, willingly or not.

Qin Yaqing - The proponent

Qin Yaqing, professor at China Foreign Affairs University, is strongly associated with the quest to build a Chinese School of IR (Kristensen, 2015, p.332). In his work, Qin draws extensively on Confucian philosophy of relations, Daoist cosmology, and also channels the sociologist Fei Xiaotong. Qin defines IR theory as having a hard core composed of a substantive and metaphysical component. According to him, the Western IR traditions have different substantive components – *power* in realism, *institutions* in liberalism, *norms* in constructivism – but a consistent meta-physical component, *rationality* (Qin, 2016, p.34). He coins his own approach to IR theory as *relational constructivism* structured around the meta-physical component of *relationality*. Instead of looking at pre-conceived individual actors, Qin focuses on the relations and processes of these actors. Overemphasising the Western constructivist focus on identity formation as an *internal* process, Qin borrows from Fei Xiaotong and locates this formation solely as revealed through relations between actors. As an example, in a typical IR scenario what is considered rational US nuclear policy differs widely depending on whether it is engaging with a rival such as Iran or an ally such as the UK (ibid, p.36). Furthermore, Qin also advances an alternative to Western Hegelian dialectics inspired by Daoist cosmology and the Confucian Classic, *The Doctrine of the Mean* or *Zhongyong*. Zhongyong dialectics look to engage and accept contradictions and create polarity without duality in contrast to Hegelian dialectics:

> Like their Western counterparts, the Chinese conceptualise the universe in a polar way, believing that progress and evolution take place by interaction of the two opposite poles [...]. [T]he Confucian tradition understands them in an immanent way. They interact not as the thesis and antithesis, but as co-theses.
>
> (Qin, 2016, p.39)

This concept opens up to new avenues of research such as relational power, relational governance and relational international systems (ibid, pp. 41-45).

Yan Xuetong - The opponent

In opposition to Qin Yaqing is Professor Yan Xuetong from Tsinghua University who has almost accidentally become the leading figure of the *Tsinghua approach*, a common denominator for scholars using ancient Chinese sources to enrich existing, especially realist, IR theory (Cunningham-Cross, 2014, p.181). A long-time public intellectual often weighing in on Chinese foreign policy, Yan is a staunch opponent of the Chinese School label – he advocates a scientific, positivist approach to social sciences closely aligned with the US empiricist tradition. For Yan, a Chinese School of IR is as of little use as a "Chinese School of physics or chemistry" (Yan, [2011] 2013, p.216). Including Yan Xuetong in a discussion on Chinese IR theory is therefore controversial, as he insists that he is merely adding perspectives to existing (Western) theory. However, as Yan himself argues, it is not up to scholars themselves to coin academic schools (ibid, pp.252-253), and he has willingly or not become a central part of the discourse on building Chinese IR theory (Demir, 2017; Kristensten 2015; Cunningham-Cross 2014b; Kai 2012; Zhang 2012). Yan would no doubt claim that through his Tsinghua approach that he is merely creating universal IR theory. However, the rationale of his work does not rest upon just any strain of intellectual thought but exclusively invokes ancient Chinese philosophers and concepts such as *moral realism* and *humane authority*. As such both he and Qin Yaqing agree that Chinese intellectual culture is an important resource from which to develop global IR, and some scholars argue that

Yan's objections to the term a Chinese School might be more a problem of phrasing than an unbridgeable gap between the two (Zhang, 2012). For this reason Yan has also become a central figure in the discussion of how Chinese culture might invigorate IR theory and guide Chinese foreign policy. The central question for Yan is "how China can become the leading power in the world and what kind of world leadership it can provide" (Yan, [2011] 2013, p.216). Although considered a hawk and "neo-comm" by some (Leonard, 2008, p.112), he also expresses belief in the peaceful rise of China managed through adherence to moral realism, which in practice means drawing foreign policy lessons from ancient Chinese philosophers. This link is clearly emphasised in the title of his book, *Ancient Chinese Thought, Modern Chinese Power* (Yan, [2011] 2013). In the realist tradition of might-makes-right, Yan sees the domination of states as a constant and natural occurrence in international politics. He believes China can become a dominating state by learning from the mistakes of the US, which he calls a hegemon, and instead cultivate harmony and strive to become a "humane authority" (ibid, p.39).

Zhao Tingyang - The outsider

The last influential thinker in advancing Chinese IR theory is Zhao Tingyang, who is associated with promoting a revamped conception of the *tianxia* system. The original *tianxia* system, literally translated as *all-under-heaven*, refers to the pre-Qin interstate system that existed between 1045-221 BCE approximately. During this period, the rule of Zhou over the other Chinese states was, according to Zhao, a "political institutional revolution not built on force, but on morality and the common good" (Zhao 2012, pp.55-56). It is important to keep in mind that just as with the "Westphalian myth of IR" (Carvalho et al. 2011), the reality of this 800 year period was much more complex – after all, it was not called the Warring States period for its adherence to morality and stability (Hui, 2004).

As a philosopher, and as such less associated with the IR community, Zhao is pushing for the most idealistic and normative project of the three scholars: a hyper-institutionalised world government and a world constitution that will entrench a philosophy of *worldness* (Zhao, 2012, p.64). *Tianxia* has become one of the most widely discussed ideas related to Chinese IR, partly due to its perceived impact on policy-making (Callahan, 2008). It is speculative at best to establish causality between academia and politics, but some scholars have pointed out similarities between Hu Jintao's concept of harmonious world and Zhao's *tianxia* system (ibid). Taking his point of departure in a critical assessment of the current state of international affairs as a failed world, he seeks to go beyond the nation-centrism of Western IR theory by inducing the concept of worldness into international theory (Zhao, 2009, p.6). Just like his two colleagues, Zhao finds inspiration in the pre-Qin micro-cosmos of interstate activity taking Confucian relationism as a metaphysical component very similar to Qin's conception of relationality (Zhao, 2012, p.49). Zhao argues for inherent differences in the Western and Chinese worldviews, seeing the former as embodied in the multipolarity of ancient Greek political states and the latter in the moral hierarchy of the Zhou Dynasty. This bipolarity opens up for a return of Hegelian dialectics, which I return to later in the discussion.

Methods and Data

Having briefly accounted for the three most prominent scholars in the Chinese School of IR debate, I now turn to data to analyse to what a degree their ideas hold sway in the wider Chinese IR community. I survey 2,544 IR articles published between 2013 and 2017 (see Figure 2). The articles included in the sample come from nine journals and include prefaces and interviews, but exclude literature reviews, conference summaries and calls for submissions. I also include a comparative angle to investigate and compare the contents of Anglophone publications with Sinophone periodicals. By comparing publications published

Sinophone publications	First published	Publisher	Articles
The Journal of International Studies 国际**政治研究**	1980	Peking University	235
Journal of Contemporary Asia-Pacific Studies 当代亚太	1992	Chinese Academy of Social Sciences	180
International Issues Studies 国际问题研究	1959	China Institute of International Studies	305
Contemporary International Relations 现代国际关系	1981	China Institutes of Contemporary International Studies	626
World Economics and Politics 世界经济与政治	1979	Chinese Academy of Social Sciences	436
Total			**1782**

Anglophone Publications	First published	Publisher	Articles
Contemporary International Relations	1981	China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations	330
China International Studies	2005	China Institute of International Studies	265
China Quarterly of International Strategic Studies	2015	Shanghai Institute for International Studies	87
The Chinese Journal of International Politics	2006	Tsinghua University; Oxford University	80
Total			**762**

Figure 2. Periodicals and number of articles included in the data survey.

by Chinese institutions in different languages, I hope to highlight potential differing priorities in the internal debate among Chinese-speaking scholars and the Anglophone periodicals that are directed at international audiences.

The purpose of bibliometric studies is to measure a discipline through published research, whether using journals, textbooks or curricula (Kristensen, 2015, p.213). In the present survey, I focus on the articles' theoretical framework in order to map the landscape of IR in China. The approach is inspired by Peter M. Kristensen's bibliometric study of IR in rising powers (2015) and Qin Yaqing's stocktaking measure (2011a), but will differ in certain key ways. By looking at the entire production of IR articles, I aim to discover how large a proportion theory innovation occupies. By measuring the proportion of IR theory in general, and then focusing on research related to the quest of developing *Chinese* IR theory, I get an empirical foundation upon which to assess whether Chinese IR theory is challenging mainstream IR theory in China. The surveyed Sinophone publications are some of the most cited and influential IR publications according the Chinese Academy of Social Science (Chinese Academy of Social Sciences Evaluation Center 2014). In addition, I have included all available Anglophone publications. It is possible to select publications with a larger representation of theory-oriented articles, but this survey aims to discover the amount of theory production in the *most influential* periodicals.

Through the coding of the articles, I first determine whether the article is mainly analytical or if it seeks to break new ground in theory innovation. This categorisation was achieved through selective reading with a focus on the abstract, theory and conclusions of each article. If a clear source of theory is discernible, I note the source. Here I categorise theories into three main groups: a *Chinese paradigm* (including keywords such as Chinese School, Confucianism, dynastic sources, Maoism, pre-Qin sources, socialism with Chinese characteristics, *tianxia* and the tributary system); *mainstream theories* (all subcategories of constructivism, liberalism and realism); and *other theories* (critical IR theory, the English School, feminism, Marxism, post-colonial IR theory and security studies). All articles were accessed through the China Knowledge Resource Integrated Database.

As Figure 3 shows, the vast majority of the articles are analytical in nature and do not refer to any specific IR theory tradition. These articles might implicitly be influenced by certain assumptions derived from specific strains of IR theory, but they do not contribute anything in the way of theory innovation. This is likely due to the prominence in the survey of periodicals published by think tanks. China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations, one of the oldest and most prestigious think tanks in China, publishes both in Chinese and English with the latter mostly containing selected translations of the former. In general the articles published by think tanks show less interest in theory, use fewer footnotes, and mainly publish foreign policy analyses and area studies. These articles lack discernible theoretical foundation and, far from innovate new theory. Instead, there is a clear concentration of theoretically innovative articles in two periodicals: the Sinophone *World Economics and Politics* and the Anglophone *Chinese Journal of International Politics*.

As highlighted in Figure 4, although the Chinese paradigm is comparable in size to 'other theories', and the mainstream theories dominate. This suggests that the hegemonic position of mainstream IR theory in the Chinese IR community remains overall secure. Nonetheless, the Sinophone sample contains the largest percentage of content classified as belonging to the 'Chinese paradigm'.

Analysis and Discussion

Commenting on the nature of a stratified system, Amitav Acharya writes that, "dominance like hegemony, is sustained by coercion and consent, but consent may be the more important element"

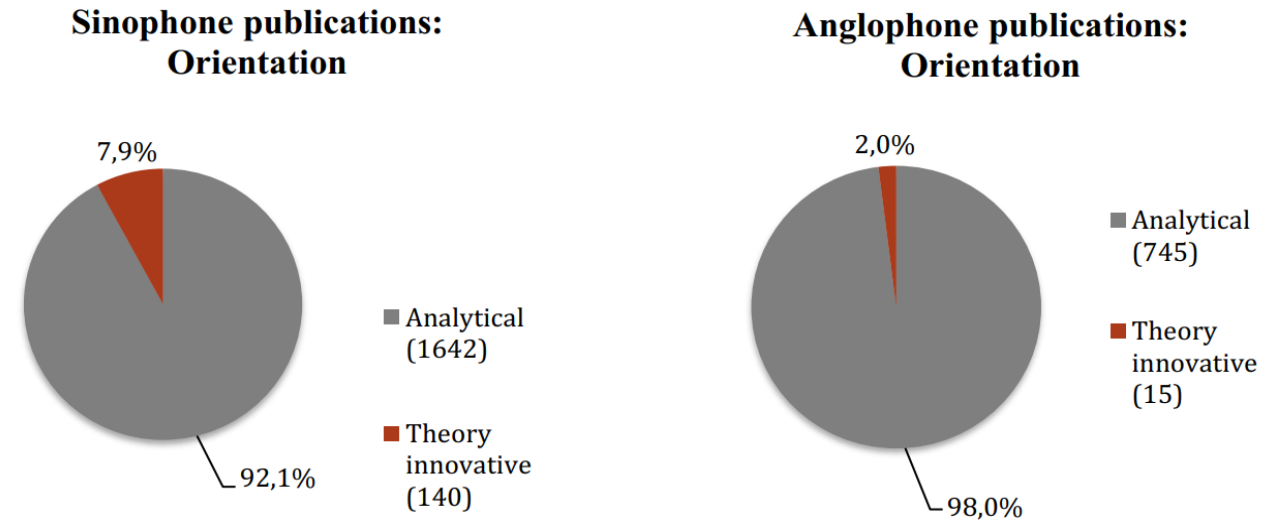

Figure 3. Orientation of content.

(Acharya, 2014, p.25). The prestige attributed to joining the club of the core, might explain why the Chinese IR community is so focused on the US community. Institutionally the Chinese IR community also retains strong bonds with its US counterpart through PhD scholarships and research foundations (Kristensen, 2015, p.238). So, what accounts for a Chinese paradigm emerging in spite of mainstream IR theories dominance? Apart from joining others in specialising in the US-dominated mainstream theory, making new theory is another way to be recognised by the *Western gaze*. As Qin Yaqing puts it, "In reality, US IR theory has consistently held a leading position in the world, and US theoretical research over the last 20 years or so has created a powerful tradition – the mainstream theories of IR. It is difficult to become a part of mainstream IR theory *without* getting approved by US academic

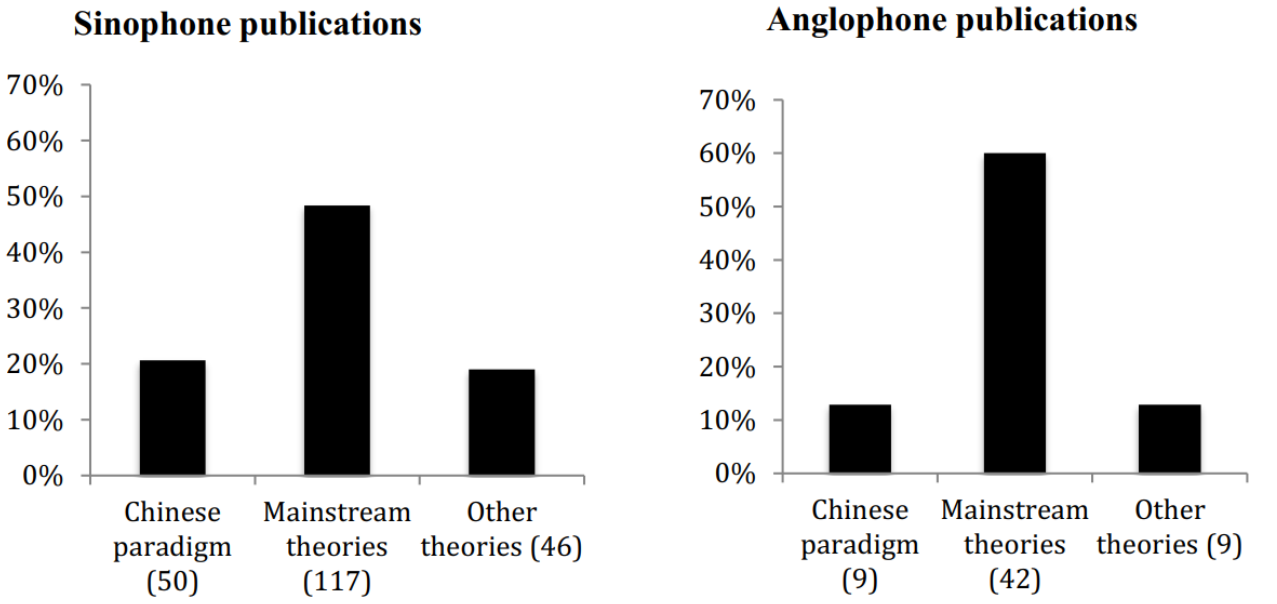

Figure 4. Clear sources of theory.

circles" (emphasis added – Qin, 2012, p.16). Coining a new school that is not explicitly critical towards existing theories and does not purport to threaten the privileged position of Western IR theory represents another way of carving out a spot within the stratified structure of the academy. However, by taking Robert Cox' (1981) maxim that "theory is always for someone and for some purpose" to heart without critical evaluation, the sanctioned sources of Chinese IR theory run the risk of reproducing tropes that are also found in Western-centric IR theory.

Cultural exceptionalism

The sanctioned Chinese theories have been criticised for flirting with cultural exceptionalism. Zhao Tingyang's *tianxia* concept has been severely attacked, in the words of one reviewer, for "distorting [the past] in order to advance an equally distorted political agenda" (Dreyer, 2015, p.1031). Beyond charges against the theory as politically biased, Hun Joon Kim points out that a metanarrative of Hegelian dialectics is still at work: "[A]ll that is good and desirable – order, legitimacy, voluntary submission – are clustered within the Chinese traditional system, and what is bad and undesirable – anarchy, disorder, war – are inherent in the Westphalia system" (Kim, 2016, p.74). A world dominated by China, or at least by Chinese principles, comes to represent a superior scenario to that of a Hobbesian world of nation states. In the same way, Yan Xuetong also stops short of putting his theory in any critical context, but sees China as being the natural heir to a system dominated by great states and empires. What makes China different from former dominating powers is the potential for following the lessons from ancient philosophy and becoming an ultra-moral power. However, the claim of moral superiority has, as some scholars point out (Hui 2012; Cunningham-Cross and Callahan, 2011), also been a staple of former empires, whether it was referred to as the *white man's burden* or a *civilising mission*.

Representational dilemmas

A problem of representation also becomes clear by mainly identifying a *Chinese* School of IR with three scholars. All of them are male, ethnically Han Chinese and working at elite institutions in Beijing. Furthermore, they all take departure in ancient Chinese, mainly Confucian, philosophy. As a mirror image of the Jesuit missionary Matteo Ricci's mistaken assumptions of religion in China as dominated by a monolithic Confucianism towering over Buddhism and Daoism (Chen, 2015), a label like *a Chinese School* also serves as a catch-all phrase to collapse nuances into one impossibly broad concept. Limiting a Chinese School to sanctioned sources prematurely excludes other potential sources such as those from China's own cultural periphery: the Daoist feminism of L.H.M Ling (Ling, 2014), perspectives from Taiwan (Shih, 2017; Chen, 2011) or possible crosspollination from other social science fields such as the Chinese New Left (Weber 2014). Lastly, there is a total erasure of non-Han perspectives despite large parts of Chinese history being dominated by nomad people – the Khitans, Xiongnu, Tibetans, Turkish, Mongols, and Manchus to name a few. Instead, Chinese culture is portrayed in an idealised, Confucian, Han-dominated form.

Historical limitations

Apart from the erasure of non-Han history, the Chinese School also excludes more recent history. Even though Qin Yaqing includes revolutionary history in the development of IR in China (Qin, 2011a, p.455), none of the sanctioned sources really make use of Chinese socialism or Maoism. An explanation might be a revolt against the ideological straitjackets of previous decades. One scholar's evaluation of the previous decades is that, "Before the 1980s no real IR theory was taught in China. The so-called theory of international politics before then was just interpretations of the viewpoints of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin, and Mao Zedong" (Song, 2001, p.63). The political socialist thinkers have largely "been pushed to the margins

of IR" (Wang and Buzan, 2014, p.16). Marxist theory is now often categorised as *pre-theory* (Hu, 2016; Wang and Buzan 2014; Qin 2011b). However, there might be a case for looking to recent intellectual, political thinkers to enrich a Chinese IR. As Daniel Vukovich argues, "[I]f postcolonial studies can read, say, Frantz Fanon and Aimé Césaire as inspirational historical figures, it is high time it did the same with Chinese and other Asian voices, from Hu Sheng or Mao himself to Ho Chi Minh" (Vukovich, 2017, p.10). As an example, Mao was influenced by Chinese tradition but had an outspokenly international outlook – drawing on Chinese tradition, hybridising theories and recognising the role of subalterns in history and politics (Dirlik, 2014). Overcoming cultural essentialism, Mao has been instrumental in the 'sinicisation of Marxism' making it an at once distinctly Chinese and Marxist product. Furthermore, Mao structured his criticism of imperialism from a specific Chinese vantage point (Deckers, 1996). As an intellectual figure, Mao might still contribute to develop a Chinese take on critical and postcolonial IR theory.

Conclusion

The international IR community remains Western-centric whether viewed from an institutional or an ideational perspective. For all the debate about a Chinese School of IR theory, this paper shows that Western mainstream IR theory continues to dominate within China. Striving for global IR is an exciting and worthwhile project, but more problems than possibilities arise from forming national schools that are defined in exclusive terms. Despite its goal of being seen as a wholly indigenous movement, the Chinese School of IR does not exist in a vacuum. Non-Chinese scholars initiated the research project that sparked Qin Yaqing's research (Acharya and Buzan, 2007), just as several non-Chinese scholars seek to develop *tianxia* theory using the case of US hegemony (Babones, 2017; Khong, 2013). The Chinese School also does not exist as a purely intellectual pursuit removed from domestic political interests (Xie, 2011). It is influenced by the drive of younger scholars to gain recognition globally (Kristensen 2015, p.243) and by prominent scholars, who wish to carve out a spot in the stratified international IR structure. As a result, the sanctioned Chinese theories almost seem to reproduce mainstream IR theory only with Chinese characteristics such as the great power politics of moral realism (realism), the hyper-institutionalism of *tianxia* (liberalism) and Qin Yaqing's subjective-focused relationalism (constructivism). This is the consequence of joining a stratified system on its own terms. The social process of achieving recognition delineates what constitutes Chinese IR theory and reproduces the system by unavoidably leaving non-sanctioned theories on the fringes. As Kristensen points out, *theory speak* from non-Western IR scholars does not deliver the radical difference usually expected from scholars based in a different context. There are no " 'third world radicals' or indigenous theorisers in mainstream journals, rather it often looks like 'social science socialised' disciplined by a mainstream discipline" (Kristensen, 2015, p.236). If the discipline truly wants to let *a thousand flowers bloom and a hundred schools contend*, it might be beneficial to look beyond the national school narrative and work to foster new connections between peripheral actors within the stratified system.

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Right-wing nationalism or just plain fun? Japanese history in the game *Kantai Collection* and its audience interpretation

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The right-wingification of Japanese media has been a topic of discussion in Japan. The online game *Kantai Collection*, in which the player controls a fleet of humanised Imperial Navy ships and other warships, has been cited as an example of such a trend. Yet Japanese media theorists, such as Eiji Ōtsuka, have claimed that presumed ideological content in games, animated series and similar media is not seen by their players/viewers in relation to reality, but rather it is seen as artefacts of the fictional worlds of these works. In this article, I investigate the presence of 'nationalist' discourses in the *Kantai Collection* media franchise. Furthermore, I analyse a set of fan-fiction works based on the said franchise to determine how or whether fans recreate such discourses in their derivative works. I demonstrate that while fan-producers largely interpret historical references strictly in the context of the original works, they also consistently omit certain discourses that are present in the original, such as those related to the Japanese imperial expansion. My findings provide qualified empirical support for the claim by Ōtsuka and others that *ideological* elements are not interpreted in relation to reality. However, even though fan-authors comment very little on such elements in explicit terms, the elements they pick for their derivative works are seldom those that could be described as right-wing and often display oppositional readings of the original works.

Keywords: Media studies; fan fiction; digital games; Pacific War; digital games

The question of whether the media in Japan – including both news and fictional movies, television series and so forth – is 'turning to the right' (*ukeika*) has been a matter of debate in the country in recent years (e.g. Tsukada, 2017; Nishizawa, 2015). Non-academic commentators have come forward with specific accusations of such a turn with regard to the popular online naval war-game-*cum*-pretty-girl-game, *Kantai Collection*. The Korean newspaper *Chosun Ilbo* decried *Kantai Collection* as a sign of the "resurgence of right-wing nationalism in Japan" (Kim, 2013), while a blogger criticized the "appropriation" of warships which participated in "war crimes" during Japan's colonial era for entertainment purposes (Aquagaze, 2014).

In this article, I analyse discourses related to Japanese history that are present in the franchise in light of the aforementioned claims. Furthermore, I analyse fan-fiction works based on the franchise to find out how they reproduce or comment on these discourses. Both are analysed in terms of a theory by Eiji Ōtsuka (2012), which proposes that audiences seek to actively expand the narratives within those works in subsequent works of popular culture. Furthermore, he proposes that even though the original works may, for example, present a historical fact in a manner associated with a certain political orientation, the audience does not *perceive* that presentation as pertaining to the real world but only to the world of the fictional narrative.

Games depicting the Pacific War are far from uncommon, but Kantai Collection is not marketed as being related to the Pacific War or to any other historical event. To the contrary, in an interview, the game's producer Tanaka Kensuke stated that the game does not have a story, but that the producers "wanted to emphasize the individuality of the characters we [the producers] developed and the relationships between the characters and create the [story] together with all the Admirals" (Famitsū, 2013). Nevertheless, the majority of the ships available to players are in fact those of the Imperial Japanese Navy. Furthermore, the game features a logic of territorial expansion, where the player starts out on the Japanese home islands and gradually expands their sphere of influence throughout the Pacific.

The overarching questions that this paper addresses are: How does the Japanese target audience see the political aspects of *Kantai Collection*? While one interpretation that sees *Kantai Collection* as right-wing is clearly possible, is this interpretation favoured by its fans?

Otaku cultural theory and ideologies in popular culture

The question of whether popular culture content is perceived as ideological by audiences in general as well as the often obsessive target audience (commonly entitled *otaku*) has most famously been discussed in Japan by the cultural critic and academic Eiji Ōtsuka (2012), whose theories are also commonly cited outside Japan (see for example Steinberg, 2012; Galbraith, Kam, & Kamm, 2016).

Ōtsuka's theories largely revolve around his idea of *grand narratives*, which can be described as consistent stories about how fictional worlds that are constructed by fan-audiences using disparate fragments work. His original example was the so-called *Bikkuriman* stickers that were included with a series of chocolate snacks, each of which contained a short story fragment. It was not the producer's goal with these stickers to construct any particularly consistent narrative, but Ōtsuka argues that their audience *did* attempt to construct such a grand narrative, that is, a coherent storyline from the exciting fragments anyway. To this end, those who purchased the snacks would keep buying more to gain more knowledge of the story (Ōtsuka, 2012, pp. 286–290). A similar logic applies to fans of computer games and animated series, where aspects of the same world or storyline are depicted from various viewpoints in different media and the never-ending instalments of the series.

Ōtsuka (2012) likens these diffuse fact-based quasi-narratives to the way history has been taught in schools in post-war Japan: as an endless series of

years and names, without an overarching narrative of what happened or why. The audience is already familiar with having to come up with their own understanding of history from disparate facts from their schooldays. Thus, when the media industry produced computer games, television series, manga and similar works with similar series of disparate years and names with little explicit connections, the audience was ready to construct narratives based on them (Ōtsuka, 2012, pp. 297–300); and, as the historical facts remembered from school were structurally similar to the fictional facts, the audience included the historical facts into their fake-historical narratives. Thus, actual historical events gave a taste of reality to fiction (Ōtsuka, 2012, pp. 87–88, 96–98).

As an example, Ōtsuka cites the animated movie and television series *Space Battleship Yamato* (1974–1975), where the former Imperial Navy battleship Yamato is resurrected as a spaceship on a mission to save Earth. As a result of its references to the Imperial Japan, the franchise tends to be labelled *nationalistic* or *right-wing*. However, Ōtsuka claims that whatever references to Japanese history were included, they were not seen by the fan-audiences as political or as making normative statements about the past or future actions of the state, but their purpose was to transmit concepts such as *dedication* and *purity* to the audience (Ōtsuka, 2012, pp. 141–145, 155–156).

More generally, the primary theoretical framework of this paper is that the audience is the site of the production of the meaning of media messages, as opposed to the producers of those messages. Furthermore, these produced meanings do not need to align with any intent, presumed or otherwise, of the original producers but can be more or less opposed to it (see for example Fiske, 2011, pp. 64–67).

Finally, although the theoretical focus of this paper is on media theory, it also deals with issues of post-war Japanese history. This history is approached from the viewpoint of *collective memory*, which refers to the "various versions of national history created by historians, officials, schools, mass media, [...] and the like" (Gluck, 1993, p. 65). In this framework, there is no definite version of a national history, but rather an "endless conversation", which is often contentious (Gluck, 1993, p. 65; Hashimoto, 2015, pp. 4–6).

My analysis is primarily concerned with the conservative side of that conversation, which stresses the progress made by Japan since the Meiji Restoration rather than criticising its pre-war colonialism and militarism (Gluck, 1993, pp. 70–72). In particular, I focus on the 'right-wing nationalist' subset of conservatives, who seek to erase the memory of atrocities committed by the Japanese military during the 1930s and 1940s, and to restore the reputation of the pre-war military (Kingston, 2013, pp. 154–173).

Some studies of specifically Japanese animations and manga, and political aspects of both have appeared (see for example Stahl, 2010; Swale, 2017), but the focus of those studies has been largely limited to the analysis of the works themselves. Also, while fan-fiction in general has been the object of increasing interest in recent years, systematic studies regarding the fan-(re)interpretation of *specific* works appear to be rare. This paper adds to the existing empirical research in this area by approaching a specific work through an empirical study of its reception by its fan-audience. In the empirical section, I answer the following questions: What discourses regarding the Pacific War does the *Kantai Collection* media franchise present? Does its fan-audience reproduce those discourses in their own fan-fiction works, comment on them in any way, or ignore them entirely by, for instance, concentrating only on the pretty-girl characters?

Methods and data

The primary methodological framework for this analysis is discourse analysis as defined by Michel Foucault (see Foucault, 1978) and in particular the subset of it known as *genealogy*. Genealogy aims to examine the historical origins of discourses to arrive at what Foucault called *the history of the present*, or

in simple terms, to describe the reason why we see and talk about things the way we do today (Kendall & Wickham, 1999, pp. 24–34). The aim of this study is not to judge historical rights or wrongs or define good and bad representations, but to investigate the historical origins of statements in the original works and how those statements appear in the derivative works. Foucault's method differentiates itself by allowing the analysis to focus on the *process* of how those statements may have come to be, rather than on the interpretation of specific events.

Furthermore, the concept of *open works*, that is, works which invite the reader to complete their meaning (as opposed to *closed works* which attempt to guide the reader towards a single preferred meaning) is used in the analysis of why certain discourses may be transferred to derivative works (Eco, 1979, pp. 3–40). In addition, the procedural rhetoric framework as defined by Ian Bogost (2007) and expanded by Adam Chapman (2016) is applied. The idea of this framework is that discourse-like procedural rhetoric emerges from the rules of digital games, as opposed to solely from the explicit narrative content (Bogost, 2007, pp. 28–40; Chapman, 2016, pp. 71–72).

I analyse works published commercially by the official producers of the *Kantai Collection* franchise, which I refer to as *original works*, and derivative fan-fiction works (*dōjinshi*) self-published by audiences of *Kantai Collection*. The analysis of the former concentrates on the online Adobe Flash-based game from 2013, which was the first appearance of the *Kantai Collection* concept, and makes references to the PlayStation Vita version of the game from 2016. I gathered factual details related to game mechanics and characters from encyclopaedias of the game, commonly known as *strategy wikis*.

Discourses noted in the original works are compared to those of self-published fan-fiction works sold at fan-fiction sales events between 2015 and 2016. For the purposes of this study, 46 fan-fiction works by 30 authors were collected and analysed. All of the works under analysis are 20-30 pages and of the manga genre. Since these self-published works are produced only in very limited quantities in print for fan-fiction sales events, I used convenience sampling (Riffe, Lacy, & Fico, 2014, pp. 75–76) – I selected available works that, on cursory inspection, appeared to have content related to the research. The criteria included, for instance, elements of realistic (as opposed to parodic) representations of warfare and direct historical references.

The total amount of available material is immense; by way of example, 1,952 fan-authors participated under the *Kantai Collection* category at Comic Market 89 (Comic Market Organizing Committee, 2015), which is a typical number for these events (Vuorikoski, 2017, pp. 76–77), and several other similar events are held every year. As such, it is not possible to make any generalisations based on the sample used for this study. A diverse range of examples related to the research questions was selected, and the results may be treated as indicative rather than definitive.

The world of *Kantai Collection*

In the game, the player designated as *Admiral* leads a fleet of Second World War warships on the Pacific Ocean in battle scenarios reminiscent of the Pacific War. However, unlike in traditional war games, the ships are represented by *pretty girl* (*bishōjo*) characters who wear warship armaments strapped on their backs and appear to ski on water. On land, the characters behave like regular people. Most of the Admiral's day is spent interacting with these girls in one of their two personas. The pretty-girl characters are collectively known as *ship-girls* (*kanmusu*).

All of the over 100 ship-girl characters have their armaments modelled upon those of historical warships, primarily ones that were in service during the 1930s and 1940s. The characters chat with the Admiral during the game and sometimes reference something that happened to their referent warship. All ship-girls are characters in so far as they have different personalities. Their personalities are often formulated in terms of

their attitude towards the Admiral; some have a cold attitude, while others indicate that they would like to have a romantic relationship with the Admiral. The depiction is definitively non-military-like, rather, it closely identifies with the tropes of the dating-simulator genre of games.

I refer to this as the *parodic* aspect of *Kantai Collection*. While references to war history are included, they are incorporated into a part of a comedic interaction between characters. Unlike in most war games, the Admiral does not actually participate in battles. After the orders are given, the fleet proceeds through a series of battles at random. That the nature of the fleet's progress is random rather than guided by any military strategy is made quite explicit: when the fleet arrives at a point where sea-routes diverge, an animation of a character spinning a roulette wheel to decide the fleet's direction is shown.

As promised by the producer, and unlike most war games which represent *realistic* military action, for example where warships are actual ships and tactical decisions are not made at random, *Kantai Collection* provides only a very limited *framing narrative* (Chapman, 2016, pp. 121–122), in all of the versions. Only the unforeseeable nature of an ongoing war is explicitly proclaimed by the enemy, known as the 'Abyssal Fleet' (*shinkaiseikan*), which are unknown creatures that feature as monsters (some with human features) that appear from the depths of the sea and attack humanity.

Nonetheless, a narrative does emerge from the procedural rhetoric of the game. I refer to this as the *realistic* aspect of the game. The player starts the game at a naval base on Honshū, at what appears to be the Yokosuka naval base. As the player completes each mission, the area of play expands throughout the Pacific, from the Kurils towards Micronesia, and, in the Vita version, to South-East Asia. Maps in the online version of the game are often obscured, although the fictional place names are indicative of the locations, for example 'Northern Waters' (*hoppō kaiiki)*. The Vita version features a realistic map of the Pacific as the game's main screen. In the animated series, a 'final victory' is to be achieved with the conquest of a specific island; the island is not named, but a map of Oahu with an enemy base where Pearl Harbor is located is shown.

In other words, while the limited framing narrative describes the objective of the game as defensive, and the animated series essentially repeats the same narrative, the discourse that emerges from the rules of the game and the plot of the animated series is that of territorial expansion throughout the former Japanese empire. This, of course, matches quite closely actual discourses associated with Japan's entry into the war with the United States – Japan had to attack to defend itself (see for example Kingston, 2013, p. 158).

***Kantai Collection* reimagined**

While some may consider the depiction of Imperial Japan's warships re-establishing Japan's colonial empire a central element of the franchise, and thus perceive the franchise as right-wing, there are no components that make it *necessary* to pay attention to this element. Nothing stops the player from proceeding through the game without giving thought to colonial expansion or any other historical reality, since there is little narrative and details, with the exception of the ship-girls' connection to historical warships, are made abstract. The question is then, how does the fan-audience interpret the historical discourses described above in their fan-fiction works?

Given that war is a major motif for the original works, one might expect war to also be a major motif for the derivative works. However, this is not the case, even in the selected *dōjinshi,* because they contain references to warfare. In many works, battles or enemy attacks are depicted on a few pages, but the stories focus on the characters spending time with each other. Furthermore, the activities of the ship-girls do not always correspond to a country sieged by an overwhelming enemy; they might visit a *matsuri* or spend their time sampling

desserts in a restaurant. A few similar merry-making episodes appear in the animated series as interludes between more action-oriented scenes, but not in the game versions. Their depiction does not correspond to pacifism where war is opposed, however. Rather, the characters exist in a state of no-war, where enemy attacks happen as if they were traffic accidents; that is, the war exists but is not relevant to its supposed fighters.

Works that depict pitched and desperate battles also exist, but their structure tends to be similar – war is happening, but it has no beginning, end or reason. In other words, war is not a practical (a means to an end or a way to acquire resources) or ideological (a defence of some abstract priceless values in an attempt to 'protect the sacred motherland') activity. It just is.

Both forms correspond to Ōtsuka's (2012) idea of *stage devices*, whereby an element that appears historical or political is only a method of bringing dramatic tension to stories. Here, the audience appears to interpret the supposedly militaristic content of *Kantai Collection* mostly as a convenient item to bring excitement to the story-world. This is possibly affected by the open nature of the original works; though the player must engage in war to some degree to progress in the game, the major parodic or character-driven aspect allows the audience to easily focus on other matters.

When the characters are brought together in pitched battles, however, it is not uncommon for the fan-authors to bring up their motivations. Even if the war remains abstract, the ship-girls still fight on behalf of their human commanders, who often treat them as little more than tools (that is, as warships, not persons). In the original works, the ship-girls fight to protect the Admiral and, by extension, the country. When the fan-authors make characters' motivations explicit, this is almost never the case – they fight to protect each other, not the state or the nation. This may take the form of ignoring orders to prioritise saving another ship-girl (at the expense of their human masters) or just giving up amid a battle because their friends are dead and there is no more reason to fight.

According Ōtsuka's (2012) theory, the commercially published works define the framework for the grand narrative. Also, the question of motivation is an aspect closed to player interpretation: both explicit and implicit narratives specify that the world will be taken over by the Abyssal Fleet unless the Admiral/player engages them. That the fan-audience often reproduces an oppositional reading (Fiske, 2011, p. 40) where the war-to-save-the-world is not the first priority implies that real-world value orientations influence the construction of the grand narrative. Notably, very few reproduce any other reading – either the matter is ignored or the oppositional reading is used.

With its stated commitment to not having any pre-made story, *Kantai Collection* does not comment on *macroscopic* historical questions such as what led to the Abyssal Fleet's appearance or what the geopolitical effects were. On the one hand, as with their approach to war, the fan-authors ignore these questions. Meanwhile, *Kantai Collection* is overflowing with a *microscopic* history of warship and sea-battle minutiae transported from real-world history. This approach is, on the other hand, enthusiastically adopted in the *dōjinshi* where fan-authors unearth even more historical facts about warships and use these facts to further build up the ship-girl characters. There are ship-girls, for instance, who enjoy drinking afternoon tea whose model warships were built using British parts, and some will even include references to history textbooks, or apologies for the lack of such references in their postscripts.

The fan-authors also produce a significant amount of mesoscale history, such as stories about plots and betrayals inside the state or between military commanders. While these plots are often structurally similar to the infighting that characterised the Japanese state in the 1930s and 1940s, they are concrete references to the world of *Kantai Collection*. Unlike the warship facts,

real-world history is not used directly; instead, the authors construct something like Ōtsuka's (2012) grand narratives of the story-world.

Finally, the expansionist logic of the original works is conspicuously absent in the *dōjinshi*. When fan-authors indicate locations where action is taking place, they are almost always near the Japanese mainland. Explicit depictions of locations are rare in general, and there was little to suggest that any action took place at any remote locale. The expansion towards the outer limits of the Japanese empire implied by the original works is never brought up. This facet of the original works appears not to be of interest for the fan-authors in constructing their grand narratives; on the contrary, when representatives of the state appear in the *dōjinshi*, they are often depicted as cruel and exploitative.

Conclusions

This study is based on a discourse analysis of the *Kantai Collection* media franchise and fan-fiction interpretations of it. It empirically evaluates theories of media consumption proposed by Eiji Ōtsuka (2012) and others and to consider claims that *Kantai Collection* represents a resurgence of right-wing nationalism.

The original media franchise *Kantai Collection* contains discourses of expansionist war and the Japanese empire, but these realistic discourses are accompanied in equal amounts by parodic representations of warships as pretty-girl characters and highly non-military-like play logics. As a result of this balancing act, it is difficult to pin any singular reading of the franchise - it can be perceived as right-wing if you look at one part of it, yet it can just as well be said to be a non-political game if you look at another. A generous interpretation would be that the producers are offering the players a chance to 'create their own story'; an opportunity to select between something like right-wing nationalism and plain fun. However, from the viewpoint of cultural studies, the political message will always exist, even if there is also 'fun'. A less generous interpretation would thus be that the parodic representation and the gender representation that centres on pretty girls are a smoke screen for the political message of the original works.

As suggested by Ōtsuka's theory, the fan-authors studied enthusiastically adopted and expanded many elements and conventions from the original works to construct an increasingly detailed grand narrative of their own. However, the same authors also studiously ignored central elements of the original works, namely those of expansionism and empire. To the contrary, they emphasised themes such as loyalty between friends and implicitly criticised state authority. In other words, the fan-authors either did not treat assumed political messages as such but instead used them as emotional devices or as a starting point for different (oppositional) narratives. They did not reproduce the enthusiasm that the original works have for the heroic military trope.

While an audience that enjoys *Kantai Collection* for its right-wing content may exist, I find no evidence that the selected audience of hard-core fans of the franchise was in *explicit* support of that content. On the contrary, when they explicitly commented on the political aspects of the original works, their interpretations of the franchise were that responsibility towards friends trumps responsibility towards the state, which is precisely the kind of attitude that nationalist commentators such as Yoshinori Kobayashi (e.g. 1998, pp. 52–55) frequently criticise. A far larger number of fan-producers took both the plain fun and the right-wing-like aspects in their stride and did not include any depictions that could be described as either support or criticism of the latter in their works. Whether this implies an *implicit* acceptance of the right-wing-like aspect or simply a lack of perception and/or interest in the matter is for future research to decide, as is the question of why the fan-audience makes these choices.

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Chinese Science Fiction Literature

Can it do for China what K-Pop and Manga do for Korea and Japan?

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There has been little success with exporting Chinese culture abroad, despite considerable efforts made by the Chinese government. Chinese science fiction (sci-fi) has attracted increasing global attention and may be an important cultural tool to express a Chinese narrative abroad. Previous research has focused on Chinese sci-fi as a national literary product to be consumed within Chinese borders, but little has been written on Chinese sci-fi as a transnational product to be consumed globally. In this paper I examine the role of Chinese sci-fi literature as a transnational cultural tool from a bottom-up perspective. I attempt to understand the current role and function of Chinese sci-fi in the Sinosphere by looking into cultural flows within the sci-fi community and examining the routes of this transnational and transcultural voyage. The findings show that Chinese sci-fi is becoming globalised reaching consumers all over the world yet still maintaining its regional context. Thus, this paper contributes to an enhanced understanding of how Chinese sci-fi literature can create a positive and powerful image of China from the bottom-up.

Keywords: Chinese science fiction literature, cultural flows, scapes, transnational movement, Ken Liu

To date, China's cultural narrative abroad has been portrayed from a top-down perspective, often dictated by the Chinese government, and it is considered as part of China's soft power. Governments or higher powers selectively choose cultural products to be consumed by the population in order to portray the version of cultural identity they wish to export. There has been on-going criticism of China's most important soft power flagship, the Confucian institutes, and therefore the export of Chinese culture has not been very successful (Kluver, 2014; Lahtinen, 2015; Thung, 2017; Yagya, 2017). Japanese manga and Korean K-pop are both examples of cultural movements that have successfully exported their country's culture abroad. Both manga and K-pop are products that are consumed globally and by individuals who initially may not have had a particular interest in Japanese or Korean culture. In the beginning, the consumers may have been interested in manga or K-pop culture, but by association they are then exposed to the country's culture which can lead to greater cultural awareness and interest.

Science fiction (sci-fi) literature is a global genre and presents characteristics shared by different cultural and linguistic traditions (Ianuzzi, 2015). Research into Chinese sci-fi has predominately focused on it as a new genre with regards to its literary history. Isaacson (2013) stresses the importance of Chinese sci-fi as a new genre dealing with questions of nationality and he relates the emergence of Chinese sci-fi to the European colonial project. Thieret (2015) diverges from this perspective and connects Chinese sci-fi with the modern Chinese utopian tradition, arguing that Chinese sci-fi articulates the hope of a more just society. This is in line with Song (2015), however Song also relates Chinese sci-fi to dystopia. Han (2013) suggests that Chinese sci-fi is a response to modernization.

These findings are important with regard to the understanding of Chinese sci-fi and its role in Chinese literature and Chinese society. They show how closely connected Chinese sci-fi has been to different political movements and the state sponsored visions of China since the late Qing era in the early twentieth century to the present day. However, Chinese sci-fi has not yet been discussed as a potentially powerful cultural agent, which can travel beyond its local national roots, to be disseminated and consumed on a global scale. In the present paper, Chinese sci-fi (*kexue huanxiang* 科学幻想) is defined as a genre of literature that concerns itself with the hypothetical future social and technological developments in the Sinosphere.

In order to find out what makes Chinese sci-fi part of a transnational culture, I look at Chinese sci-fi as an on-going cultural movement that is shared and consumed by a community of people from different locations in East Asia as well as globally. To trace the flow of products and how they are being promoted, I draw on Arjun Appadurai's five dimensions of global cultural flows: ethnoscapes, mediascapes, technoscapes, financescapes, and ideoscapes respectively (Appadurai, 1996). An important notion in Appadurai's framework is the use of these different scapes to explore cultural flows in the globalization process. Ethnoscape refers to the scape of moving groups and individuals such as refugees, guest workers and tourists. Technoscape refers to the global configuration of technology, both mechanical and informational. Financescape refers to the movement of global capital, via stock exchanges and currency markets for instance. These scapes belong together and are inseparable as they act as a constraint on movement both within themselves and on mediascapes and ideoscapes, which convey what we think about the first three scapes. Mediascape refers to the electronic distribution of information, such as newspapers, television stations and film, and the images created by these media. Finally, ideoscape refers to the ideologies of states, such as the Confucian institutes, democracy and freedom. The different scapes might be slightly adjusted to fit into one's own research topic. In this article, ideoscape refers to influential and powerful people rather than states

and governments, and ethnoscape (in the last section) refers to cultural differences in the sci-fi landscape rather than the movement of individuals.

A landscape does not look the same from different angles and "[t]he suffix *-scape* allows us to point to the fluid, irregular shapes of these landscapes, shapes that characterize international capital as deeply as they do international clothing style." (Appadurai, 1996, p.33). Landscapes are perspectival constructs and "the individual actor is the last locus of this perspectival set of landscapes, for these landscapes are eventually navigated by agents who both experience and constitute larger formations, in part from their own sense of what these landscapes offer." (Appadurai, 1996, p.33). This perspective puts the *angle* of a person's viewpoint into globalizing dynamics, and highlights that facts and factors are not entirely historically given and generated by impersonal macro-forces. Using Appadurai's framework to trace cultural flows in a global context contributes towards explaining whether Chinese sci-fi can successfully export Chinese cultural products abroad, by creating a convincing narrative of *Chineseness* that supports a positive and powerful image of China on a global stage.

The Chinese sci-fi scape from a bird's eye view

Similar to Japanese manga or Korean K-pop, Chinese sci-fi may have the ability to be a transnational cultural movement from a bottom-up perspective – whereby *individuals* have easy access to and choose to consume cultural products – and create a positive image of Chineseness. Economically, Chinese sci-fi is a successful industry and the global sci-fi community is turning its attention towards China, as The Hugo Awards clearly show. The Hugo Awards are a set of literary awards given annually for the best science fiction or fantasy works published in English or translated into English, and for achievements made in the previous year. Two Chinese writers have recently won The Hugo Awards, the "best known literary award for science fiction writing" (Jordison, 2008): Liu Cixin (刘慈欣) for Best Novel in 2015 and Hao Jingfang (郝景芳) for Best Novelette in 2016. In this section, I trace some of the cultural flows that are emerging from Chinese sci-fi, and discuss some of the Chinese writers of sci-fi that appear on a transnational level.

The Ethnoscape and the Moving Individual

A moving individual crosses borders and changes the ethnoscape, and as such, the moving individual is an agent of cultural flows. An ethnoscape therefore describes not only the movement of individuals, it also describes the movement of cultures within and across different landscapes. An important moving individual regarding Chinese sci-fi is Ken Liu.

In November 2017, the annual Singapore Writers Festival hosted literary talents from all over the world. The Singapore Writers Festival is one of Asia's premier literary events and has hosted literati such as Carol Ann Duffy, Michael Cunningham, Tash Aw, Neil Gaiman and Nobel Prize winner, Gao Xingjian. One of the writers headlining the Singapore Writers Festival in 2017 was the highly acclaimed writer and translator of sci-fi, Ken Liu. Liu was born in 1976 in Lanzhou, China and emigrated with his parents to the United States at age eleven when his mother, a pharmaceutical chemist, was completing postdoctoral work at Stanford University (Berry, 2016). Liu started to write sci-fi in the early 2000s and has since received numerous awards (Liu, 2018). His short story, *The Paper Menagerie*, was the first work of fiction to win the Nebula award (which annually recognize the best works of science fiction or fantasy published in the United States), the Hugo, and the World Fantasy Award (a set of awards given each year for the best fantasy fiction published during the previous calendar year) in 2011, 2012, and 2012 respectively. Ken Liu's short story, *Mono no aware*, won the 2013 Hugo and his novella, *The Man Who Ended History: A Documentary*, was also nominated for a Hugo in 2012. In 2017, it was announced that Liu would be writing an official Star Wars novel called *The Legends of Luke Skywalker*. Despite writing in English and growing up in the

United States Liu is considered, by media covering sci-fi and the sci-fi community, to be one of the most important figures in promoting Chinese sci-fi literature across the world (Kidd, 2016; Gong Haiying, 2018). His media presence greatly exceeds other Chinese sci-fi authors – a search on *Ken Liu* on Google, for instance, generates 25,600,000 search results, while a search on *Liu Cixin* generates only 807,000 (as of December 2018).

Highlighting the global nature of the Chinese sci-fi community, Liu recently headlined the seventh Open Book Festival (2018) in Cape Town, South Africa. Liu further attended, among many other literary events, the Texas Book Festival in 2016 and New York's Book Riot Live festival in 2016. After headlining the Singapore Writers Festival in 2017, Liu travelled to Hong Kong to attend the Hong Kong International Literary Festival.

Liu is considered one of the most interesting sci-fi writers globally. He is a bestselling author and his works are being sold to and read by a growing audience. Despite being an author in his own right, Liu is perhaps more acknowledged for translating the literary work of Liu Cixin (刘慈欣), who is arguably the most famous Chinese author of sci-fi worldwide.

The Financescape and the Bestselling Author

Economically, Liu Cixin has been a great success. He was born in 1963 in Yangquan, Shanxi and he published his first sci-fi short story, *The Longest Fall* (*Diqiu Dapao* 地球大炮), in 1998. His first novel, *The Devil's Bricks* (*Mogui Jimu* 魔鬼积木), was published in 2002, and he swiftly shot to prominence in China. His great breakthrough, however, came with his most famous novel, *The Three-Body Problem* (*San Ti*三体), published first in serialized form in the Chinese sci-fi magazine *Science Fiction World* (*Kehuan Shijie* 科幻世界) in 2006, and then as a book in 2008. The novel is the first part of a trilogy, *Remembrance of Earth's Past* (*Diqiu Wangshi* 地球往事); however, readers habitually refer to the trilogy as the *Three-Body* (*San Ti* 三体). The novel and its two successors became a huge success in China. Each novel sold over 500,000 copies and far exceeded the sales of any modern Chinese sci-fi novel since the genre appeared late in the Qing dynasty (Amy Qin, 2014). The trilogy drew wide attention to the small sci-fi market in China, and, as Liu Cixin says in his own words:

> At the time of the Three-Body's publication, China's science fiction market was anxious and depressed. The long marginalization of science fiction as a genre led to a small and insular readership. [...] it surprised everyone when the book gained widespread interest in China and stimulated much debate. The amount of ink and pixels that have been spilled on account of Three-Body is unprecedented for a science fiction novel.
>
> (Liu, C., 2014)

The first novel in the trilogy, *The Three-Body Problem* (*San Ti* 三体), hit the English-speaking market in November 2014. The translation from Chinese into English was made by Ken Liu and was highly acclaimed as noted above. In a short period of time, the book sold more than 110,000 copies and the global sales revenue reached over two million US dollars (Beijing review, 2016). In 2015, *The Three-Body Problem* won the Hugo Award for Best Novel. Liu Cixin was the first Asian writer to receive the award, and *The Three-Body Problem* was the first translated work ever to receive the award for Best Novel. The book has been translated into thirteen different languages and the German translation won the Kurd Laßwitz Preis in 2017 for Best Foreign SF Work Published in German.

The Ideoscape and some Influential Voices

The ideoscape, the opinion of powerful and influential individuals regarding different cultural products, can greatly influence individuals' thoughts about products. The market is in tune with the impact of the ideoscape – individuals sometimes even have the term *influencer* on their business

card. As for Chinese sci-fi, the former president of the United States, Barrack Obama, mentioned the trilogy by Liu Cixin as a definitive book of his presidency in an interview with The New York Times:

> [...] just wildly imaginative, really interesting. [...] The scope of it was immense. So that was fun to read, partly because my day-to-day problems with Congress seem fairly petty — not something to worry about. Aliens are about to invade.
>
> (Kakutani, 2017)

The Three-Body Problem also appeared on Mark Zuckerberg's Facebook reading list, *A Year of Books*, in October 2015 (Zuckerberg, 2015). Zuckerberg, the co-founder of Facebook, has been ranked by *Time Magazine* (Grossman, 2010) as one of the most influential people in the world.

The increasing global attention on and appreciation of Chinese sci-fi has resulted in a greater market demand for sci-fi literature originating from China. Two young female writers, Hao Jingfang (郝景芳) and Jia Xia (夏笳), soon met this demand and both of the authors' works have been translated into English by Ken Liu. In his international travels to literary events, Ken Liu has both discussed and promoted these authors, and they have both also benefited greatly from the technoscape and mediascape as outlined below.

The Technoscape, the Mediascape and the Innovative

The technoscape enables Chinese sci-fi to be spread easily and quickly within the global sci-fi community. In particular, short stories are being translated rapidly into different languages and they are available on the internet in different magazines that specialize in sci-fi. This is tightly connected to the mediascape and, as the media reports more on Chinese sci-fi, the attention on the literature grows. Two authors in particular have gained widespread attention in the mediascape.

Hao Jingfang (郝景芳) was born in Tianjin in 1984 and considers herself to be a part-time writer. She has written two full-length sci-fi novels and various short stories. In 2016, Hao Jingfang received the Hugo Award for Best Novelette for *Folding Beijing* (*Beijing Zhedie* 北京折叠). Hao Jingfang was the first Chinese woman to receive the award; amongst other nominees for the prize was the American author Stephen King. The story is to be adapted into a film, directed by Korean-American, Josh Kim.

An interesting observation of Hao Jingfang's work is the way she uses the internet to promote and distribute her literary products. The short stories have been translated into English and are easily accessible on the internet, which allows for national and international distribution and consumption of the work within the sci-fi and wider literary community. The wide accessibility of the work highlights the transnational cultural Chinese sci-fi movement from a bottom-up perspective. In an interview, Hao Jingfang stated that "A fair number of Chinese SF writers provide readers with glimpses of the present Chinese society, especially young people's daily anxieties and the social issues that penetrate people's quotidian lives." (Zong. E. Y., 2018).

In 2017 Hao Jingfang, together with five other authors, released an interactive story online in which the readers have the possibility to guide themselves to nearly 50 different endings (Denton, 2017). The story has not yet been translated into English, but this new way to approach storytelling clearly shows how innovative and conscious Hao Jingfang is regarding technology and media.

Xia Jia (夏笳) is another writer who has gained much attention in the sci-fi scape. Xia Jia was born in 1984 in Xi'an. She has won numerous awards for her sci-fi works, among them five Galaxy Awards and six Chinese Nebula Awards. Questioned in an interview about "what made Chinese sci-fi Chinese?", Xia Jia responded:

> Science fiction's creative inspirations—massive machinery, new modes of transportation, global travel, space exploration—are the fruits of

> industrialization, urbanization, and globalization, processes with roots in modern capitalism. But when the genre was first introduced via translation to China at the beginning of the twentieth century, it was mostly treated as fantasies and dreams of modernity, material that could be woven into the construction of a "Chinese Dream."
>
> (Jia, X., 2014)

Xia Jia's stories have been published in all major sci-fi journals and magazines globally and some of her works have been translated into Japanese, Czech, Polish and Italian.

Chinese sci-fi in the Global Community

The scapes briefly explored in the previous section clearly show that there is an on-going cultural movement regarding Chinese sci-fi on a transnational level, and "the movement of goods, ideas, cultural products and finance" (Iwabuchi et al, 2004, p.2) is affecting the framing of that transnational cultural traffic. A change of direction, when it comes to cultural flows, has taken place over the last few years and the change is in many ways noteworthy. As a popular culture product being consumed globally, the products have so far mostly been produced in the Anglosphere, and "the predominant cultural/moral interests in popular culture and its consumption are often focused on American imports" (Chua Beng Huat, 2004, p.202). It is evident that Chinese sci-fi is on the verge of being globalized, and the change in direction started with Ken Liu's translation of *The Three-Body Problem* into English in 2014, a translation that brought Chinese sci-fi to international attention.

Sci-fi is acknowledged as a global genre with global characteristics (Ianuzzi, 2015) and the rise of Chinese sci-fi over the last few years indicates that it is being globalized as we speak. Globalization is, however, mostly seen in a Western context and mostly applies to Western homogenization when theorized (see Appadurai, 1996). Technology and media are usually considered extremely important agents regarding globalization and as Appadurai (1996) argues, globalization is not equal to homogenization; on the contrary, it brings regionalization with it as well.

I approach globalization from a regional viewpoint and regard culture as a concept of difference (Appadurai 1996, Frey and Spakowski 2016). If culture *is* a concept of difference, how is this difference being portrayed in Chinese sci-fi? As stated previously, Liu Cixin is the most influential writer of Chinese sci-fi on a global scale. I therefore present how a short analysis of his best-selling novel *The Three-Body Problem* is useful in understanding how East Asian or Chinese identity that is being presented in modern Chinese sci-fi can relate to the global community through the sharing of concepts and ideas that are characteristic of sci-fi.

Liu Cixin was sent by his parents to his ancestral home in Luoshan County, Henan, during the Cultural Revolution. This was an extremely turbulent time in modern Chinese history and Liu Cixin considers the Cultural Revolution to be a major influence in his life (Lanning, 2017). The story of *The Three-Body Problem* is set in the context of the Cultural Revolution and clearly portrays the trauma of this historical period. Part one of the novel is called 'Silent Spring', and the first chapter of part one is called 'The Madness Years: China, 1967'. Those few words indicate a strong connection to modern Chinese history. For a Chinese reader, they act as markers and immediately put the story into a particular context, namely the turbulent years of the Cultural Revolution. In an interview, Liu Cixin stated:

> The Cultural Revolution provides the necessary background for the story. The tale I wanted to tell demanded a protagonist who gave up all hope in humanity and human nature. I think the only episode in modern Chinese history capable of generating such a response is the Cultural Revolution. It was such a dark and absurd time that even dystopias like 1984 seem lacking in

> imagination in comparison.
>
> (Grassman, 2016)

Anglo-American science fiction creates identity by drawing heavily on Anglo-American history – the war of independence, sixties psychedelia, the Wild West and such – which in turn creates a sense of 'We-ness' among Anglo-American readers that is hard to access for those who are not part of Anglo-American history. However, Anglo-American history has in many ways been globalized by the sheer power of the Anglo-American movement of goods, ideas, cultural products and finance. Liu Cixin draws heavily on modern Chinese history in *The Three-Body Problem*, thereby creating a sense of We-ness among Chinese readers. The Anglo-American world is not (and neither are other worlds) part of that history, hence it can be seen as an act of regionalization on a global scale.

> Lei was a typical political cadre of the time, so he possessed an extremely keen sense for politics and saw everything through an ideological lens.
>
> (Liu and Liu, 2016, p. 308)

Liu Cixin is repeatedly using We-ness markers throughout the novel. A Chinese reader can easily decode both the meaning in the quotation above, and the connotations that follow. A Chinese reader is included in and fully aware of Liu Cixin's textual references. A common Anglo-American reader is not necessarily familiar with the contexts in use, particularly not "the tenor of discourse [...] [which] refers to who is taking part, to the nature of the participants, their statuses and roles." (Halliday and Hasan, 1989, p.12). Nevertheless, there is a common We-ness globally in being a consumer of sci-fi; sci-fi is a global genre with a strong identity that has characteristics shared by different cultural and linguistic traditions. We-ness is multi-layered and, in the case of Chinese sci-fi, We-ness can be considered from a regional point of view that includes and unifies regional readers. The sense of We-ness gradually expands, including and unifying more and more readers and, in the end, will include and unify all readers of sci-fi on a global scale. Sci-fi as a genre makes this expansion of We-ness possible. The strong Chinese identity and the common cultural characteristics that are portrayed in Chinese sci-fi promote its success in functioning as a transnational cultural movement. Chinese sci-fi is a powerful cultural agent from a bottom-up perspective and this analysis shows that it can successfully create a positive image of Chineseness abroad.

Conclusion

Chinese sci-fi is a growing success and there is an ongoing cultural movement regarding Chinese sci-fi on a transnational level. The greatest influence of literary cultural flow has come from the Anglosphere. However, as this paper has shown, a notable change that was initiated by Chinese sci-fi has taken place over the last few years regarding the direction of both products and ideas within sci-fi. The change started with Ken Liu's translation of Liu Cixin's *The Three-Body Problem* into English in 2014. The translation gained global attention and paved the way for other Chinese authors of sci-fi to be known beyond Chinese borders. The mediascape and the technoscape have contributed to the globalization of Chinese sci-fi, and the different scapes have enabled Chinese sci-fi to be regionalized in the context of globalization. To date, most of the research into Chinese sci-fi has focused on its role within China rather than as a cultural tool that has the ability to make a large global impact. Appadurai's (1996) framework of cultural flows enables Chinese sci-fi to be researched in a transnational context. As a popular culture product being consumed globally, Chinese sci-fi brings Chinese culture to readers who are first and foremost interested in high quality sci-fi. The flow of Chinese sci-fi embodies aspects of Chinese history, culture and daily life, and can therefore be considered a cultural agent

that reaches consumers globally from the bottom up. Future studies in this area could reveal how this transnational movement has increased the reader's awareness of China and Chinese cultures.

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Finding a New Narrative of Chinese Business Leadership by Giving Voice to Chinese Millennials

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In this article, I study Chinese business leadership from the post-heroic perspective, as I try to understand the culture that creates power dynamics in China. I challenge the dominating narrative of Chinese leadership, namely the Confucian style autocratic leadership, giving special attention to the power distance dimension of Hofstede's cultural studies in both the theoretical and empirical work in order to understand the construction of hierarchies in the Chinese context. Using empathy-based stories as the method of inquiry with 111 respondents from three different Chinese universities, I give voice to the Chinese Millennials. The data suggests that Chinese Millennials prefer low power distance to high power distance. Chinese Millennials have a pragmatic and logical approach to leadership; they want to create organizations that have good co-operation between all organization levels; the opinions of subordinates are important in decision-making process; big differences in salaries and other benefits are not accepted by Chinese Millennials. Chinese Millennials have a humble attitude and they believe in continuous improvement within organizations. Similar to their counterparts in other countries, Chinese Millennials are ethically and socially conscious and show a high-degree of compassion towards people in weaker positions.

Keywords: China, post-heroic leadership, empathy-based stories, Millennials, Chinese business.

We should pay more attention to how we talk about leadership and to whom we give voice through leadership research. From Plato's *Republic* to Sunzi's *Art of War* and Machiavelli's *Prince,* leadership has been described as a characteristic of an individual. The success of nations or organizations are painted as the grand work of their leaders. History has been written in a way that gives the blame or glory to individual leaders, most often men (Grint, 2001; 2011). The great illusion of hierarchy is that power flows from top to bottom, whereas in fact power is given to the leader by the subordinates (Pye, 1988, pp. 284–286).

The post-heroic leadership perspective treats leadership as co-constructed between people, rather than merely a trait connected to an individual (see for example Carroll, Levy & Richmond, 2008; Crevani, Lindgren & Packendorff, 2010; Denis, Langley & Sergi, 2012; Grint, 2011; Raelin, 2011; Ladkin, 2010; Uhl-Bien, 2006). In post-heroic leadership research, organizations are treated as cultural products; leadership should be seen in its social context and as an integral part of culture (Bathurst & Edwards, 2011; Crevani et al., 2010; Wood, 2005). Alternatively, organizational ambidexterity (OA) sees that both exploration and exploitation are needed: organizations need to be able to innovate and change, while maintaining some of their core activities (D'Szouza, Sigdyal & Struckell, 2017; O'Reilly & Tushman, 2013; Raisch & Birkinshaw, 2008). Both post-heroic leadership theory and OA are pushing the leadership paradigm to new directions, from dealing with good and bad traits of leaders towards seeing leadership as a process that involves the entire organization and the cultural environment. In this spirit, I attempt to understand the culture that constructs Chinese leadership as phenomenon. By making the norms of Chinese leadership more visible, the Chinese people may better understand their own role in constructing hierarchies.

In addition to being extensively leader-focused, previous research in this field has neglected the diversity within Chinese business leadership (Chen & Lee, 2008; Wang & Chee, 2011). An effort has been made over the past ten years to broaden the scope of Chinese leadership research, but the stereotype of the Confucian autocratic leader still prevails. Research has contrasted the differences between Western and Chinese leaders greatly and very little attention has yet been given to the Millennial generation. (Zhang, Chen, Chen, & Ang, 2014.) Some recent studies indicate that Chinese Millennials have common values with their Western counterparts as they tend to be more individualistic and have fewer Confucian and other traditional Chinese values than the previous generation (Ren, Wood & Zhu, 2015; Zhang et al., 2014). As such, additional studies on Chinese Millennials are needed. Millennials are the generation born between the 1980s and the late 1990s or early 2000s (Bucic, Harris & Arli, 2012; Pendergast, 2007; Pew Research Centre, 2010). I aim to find the possible new voices among Chinese Millennials who would be able to break the stereotypes created by cultural studies and business leadership studies.

Different kinds of organizations in China have different kinds of leaders. Chen and Lee (2008) note that the Western scholars have given multinational corporations most attention, which has given a one-sided picture of Chinese leadership. (Chen & Lee, 2008). Furthermore, the research on Chinese leadership has overemphasized Confucianism, which is only one of the many philosophies that affect Chinese leadership. (Chen & Lee, 2008; Wang & Chee, 2011.) The modern history of China has left the country with both traditional and modern thought in coexistence (Chen & Lee, 2008). The reality of Chinese business leadership is constructed through traditional influence, market influence and Western influence (Ren et al., 2015, p. 76). The Western leadership theories have had an impact especially on task related management, but the traditional Chinese schools of thought have had more impact on how leaders govern their subordinates (Chen & Lee, 2008; Wang & Chee, 2011; Zhang, Chen, Liu & Liu, 2008). According to the Chinese traditional

thinking, leadership practices should be changed according to circumstances (Chen & Lee, 2008; Wang & Chee, 2011) and as everything is under constant change, so must the leaders be able to adapt to different situations and play different roles. Mao Zedong was a great example of a leader with many roles (Wang & Chee, 2011). In fact, some scholars have argued that one of the most notable characteristics of Mao was his ability to change and recreate himself completely (see for example Lu & Lu, 2008, pp. 211–214; Pye, 1976; Schwarts, 1968; Schram, 1973; Short, 1999). I want to avoid simplifying Chinese leadership further, and thus study the core of leadership: distribution of power.

In this paper, I seek to answer the questions: Which indicators of power distance, as defined by Hofstede (2001), do the Chinese Millennials identify with and to what extent? How do Chinese Millennials talk about leadership? And, what kind of leadership styles and practices do the Chinese Millennials prefer?

Power Distance

The element of a national culture that affects leadership practices the most is power distance (Hofstede, 2001; 2017). All organizations are hierarchical to some extent and there are many ways to divide power within hierarchies. Therefore, it is more important to investigate the leader-subordinate relationship than to look at an organizations' hierarchical structures. According to Hofstede (2001, p. 79), *"Power Distance is defined as the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally."* On a scale from zero to 100 China scores high with 80 points on the power distance dimension (Hofstede, 2001; 2017). Countries such as China that score high on power distance dimension, usually have centralized authoritarian regimes and subordinates hold very little power (Hofstede, 2001; Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2010).

Hofstede's national culture theory has been criticized widely (see Jackson, 2011; Kirkman, Lowe & Gibson, 2006; Touburg, 2016) and yet his theory is still prevalent in cross-cultural management research (see for example Bissessar, 2018; Claus, Callahan & Sandlin, 2018; Minkov, 2014; Shao, Rupp & Skarlicki & Jones, 2013; Stock, Strecker & Bieling, 2016; Vasile & Nicolescu, 2016). It is also widely used in business research on China (see for example Fu & Kamenou, 2011; Kim, Yoon, Cho, Li & Choi, 2016; Zhang & Spicer, 2014). This paper recognizes the impact of Hofstede's theory but does not accept the authoritarian stereotype of Chinese leadership it has fortified. Thus, in this paper I challenge the idea of high power distance in China.

For more than a decade there have been indications that strong hierarchy in Chinese organizations might be challenged by younger generations. For example, Fu, Wu, Yang, and Ye (2007) found that Chinese people would prefer lower power distance compared to the current level. They concluded that especially the Chinese young generation might hold values that are more egalitarian. (Fu et al., 2007, p. 891–892.) The results of this study give some indication on how Chinese Millennials relate to power distance and leadership. By empirically examining the preferences of a younger Chinese generation, I argue that the authoritarian Confucian leadership ideal is outdated in 21st century China. The main argument is that the Chinese Millennials prefer a less authoritarian style of business leadership than the cultural studies of Hofstede have indicated, which challenges the old paradigm.

Methods and Data

I use empathy-based stories as the method of inquiry, as it is a useful method in social research when the researcher who is studying a culture has a different nationality and cultural background (Posti-Ahokas, 2013). In the empathy-based story method, data is obtained by asking respondents to write a story. This story is written based on an introductory script that the researcher has

constructed. The respondent either continues the story detailed in the introductory script or describes what has taken place prior to it. . The script is written so that it instructs the respondent as to how they should proceed with their response. This often means posing a clear question or giving a task at the end of the script, such as "What do you think happens next?" and/or "Please describe how things avail." Usually the researcher comes up with two to five different variations of each script. (Eskola, 1991; 1997; 1998.) When one item is varied in the introductory script, it changes the logic of the script and thus creates different scenarios (Rajala & Eskola, 1995). The variation of the script is crucial as it gives this method its particular characteristics. With the variation in the scripts, the method of empathy-based stories can function similarly to a laboratory experiment and differ from essay writing (Eskola, 1991; 1997).

For this study, I wrote two different introductory scripts, which both had one variation (see below). Each respondent responded to only one version of one of the scripts (either 1A, 1B, 2A or 2B). The scripts were first written in English and then translated into Chinese. With the first script, Hofstede's (2001) idea about how high power distance affects the way inequality in wages and other benefits are accepted by those subordinate in the hierarchy was tested. Usually in cultures with high power distance it is generally accepted that higher ranking personnel get significantly better wages than those below them in rank. (Hofstede, 2001.)

The first introductory script (with the two different variations in bold) was:

A middle-sized company (100 employees) has had ***big economic losses (1A)/ good profits (1B)*** *in the past few years. The employees are complaining that their working hours are too long and that their wages are too low and that their bosses are enjoying too big wages and other benefits. How should the CEO and other top managers react to the situation at hand and make it better? Describe how the situation in the company evolves.*

The goal of the second script was to generate answers as to how power distance affects communication within organizations. The Hofstede cultural dimension model suggests that in countries with high power distance, criticism from employees in lower level positions does not have a big effect on managers' behavior compared to criticism coming employees in higher level positions in the organization (Hofstede, 2001). A second goal was to get information on how much freedom the subordinates are given. The aspect of freedom is important for understanding Hofstede's (2001) claim that in a country that scores high on power distance such as China, the subordinates should be controlled instead of having freedom regarding their own work.

The second introductory script (with the two different variations in bold) was:

Imagine yourself around fifteen years from now. You are working in an organization with around 200 employees. You are one of the highest-ranking leaders in the organization. ***Several of your employees complain that you are not giving them enough freedom in their work and that they are not satisfied with you as their leader. (2A) / Other old and high-ranking leader of your organization complains that you are not giving your employees enough freedom in their work and that he is not satisfied with you as a leader. (2B)*** *Describe how you are going to react and what kind of changes would you make regarding your own leadership practices? What would make you a good leader again in the eyes of* ***your employees (2A)/ the other high-ranking leaders (2B)?***

130 scripts were handed out in total: 65 of each script and 32 of one variation and 33 of the other. The response rate was 86% (a total of 111 respondents). All the respondents were Chinese nationals aged 18 to 23 years. Their majors or minors were related

Script		1A	1B	2A	2B
No. of responses		29	26	26	30
No. of Chinese characters	Min.	25	40	34	54
	Max.	360	272	436	352
	Average	178	170	202	176
	Median	187	193	193	172

Table 1. Number of responses and Chinese characters in the responses

to business or business management. 80 of the respondents were female and 31 were male. There were 29 story responses for script 1A; 26 stories for 1B; 26 stories for 2A; and 30 stories for 2B. The data gathering took place in classroom situations. All the stories were handwritten in Chinese. The students were asked to write in Mandarin, which is either the mother tongue or second language of the respondents. The data was collected in Renmin University of China, Communications University of China in Nanjing and Nanjing University of Technology between May 2016 and July 2016. The answers were written anonymously.

The length of the stories reflects how difficult it is for the respondent to respond to the introductory script; usually, the longer the answer, the easier it is for the respondent to write the story (Eskola & Kujanpää, 1992; Eskola & Wäljäs, 1992). In Table 1, the number of Chinese characters in the responses are displayed. There is no significant difference between the lengths of the answers between different scripts. In addition, the average and median values of the number of characters used shows that it was rather easy for the respondents to write their stories.

I used a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods to analyze the data, namely tabulation, thematic analysis and discursive analysis. According to Eskola and Kujanpää (1992), using quantitative methods is suitable if the number of respondents exceeds 100. For the *thematic analysis* it was natural to divide the data first into two sets according to the two different introductory scripts, and then subsequently into two further sets according to the two different scenarios in order get a deeper understanding of the effect of the variation in the introductory scripts. The stories were tabulated by combining a data driven and theory driven approach. First, the most relevant expressions were written down. These expressions were then put into categories that were formed using Hofstede's indicators of high and low power distance. *Discursive analysis* investigates the way that the stories are written and constructed (Eskola, 1997, pp. 96–99; Eskola & King, 1995; Eskola & Suoranta, 2014). As such, after the thematic analysis and tabulating the stories, a more in-depth analysis was done using the principals of discursive analysis, whereby I read each of the stories several times.

Empirical Findings

The effects of power distance within organizations are presented in Table 2. The table combines all the responses; it summarizes the results regarding power distance indicators. The first column presents the low power distance indicators and the fourth column the corresponding high power distance indicator as derived from Hofstede (2001, pp. 103-110). The second and fifth column show how many stories mentioned the indicator, and the third and sixth column show the corresponding percentage points.

From the table, we can see that there was clearly more emphasis on low power distance than high power distance in the answers. Nevertheless, it is important to note that several elements of high power distance can be found in some of the stories. This gives us an indication that while most Chinese Millennials might prefer a low power distance, there are still some individuals who prefer a high power

Low Power Distance	NT	%	High Power Distance	NT	%
Inequality should be avoided	**14**	12,6%	Inequality is natural	**0**	0%
Several people participate in decision making	**29**	26,1%	Central authority	**6**	5,4%
The opinions of subordinates are important in decision making process	**64**	57,7%	The opinions of subordinates do not need to be considered	**22**	19,8%
Ideal leader is democratic	**12**	10,8%	Ideal leader is a father figure or a benevolent despot	**8**	7,2%
Organization models vary	**8**	7,2%	Hierarchical pyramid model	**0**	0%
Hierarchy exists because of practical reasons	**19**	17,1%	Hierarchy exists because people are born unequal	**0**	0%
Subordinates are given a lot of freedom	**33**	29,7%	Subordinates are being controlled	**1**	0,9%
Leader guides subordinates	**20**	18%	Leader tells subordinates what to do	**6**	5,4%
Information is given to everyone	**22**	19,8%	Information is given only to leaders	**3**	2,7%
Small differences in wages and other benefits	**56**	50,5%	Big differences in wages and other benefits	**2**	1,8%
Subordinates participate in creative work	**2**	1,8%	New ideas are always checked by the leaders	**0**	0%
Subordinates can easily complain about their leaders	**12**	10,8%	It is difficult to complain about leaders	**0**	0%

Table 2. Number and percentage of stories where each power distance indicator was mentioned

distance. It is also important to note that some Chinese Millennials might approach some problems with practices that belong to low power distance cultures, but then other problems with practices that belong to high power distance cultures. As in most of the stories, the solutions proposed were clearly not related to either low or high power distance, but instead included elements of both. This indicates that while the Chinese Millennials appreciate equality in power distribution, they also accept some hierarchy in power, depending on the situation.

The two indicators that consider freedom and wages were mentioned in many of the texts because these issues were mentioned in the introductory script. It is notable however, that a total of 64 stories mentioned the importance of the opinions of subordinates in decision-making processes. On the other hand, in 22 stories respondents relayed that the opinions of subordinates do not need to be considered in decision-making process. This was the most common high power distance indicator.

Several studies in the past have concluded that the most important motivator for Chinese workers is salary (see for example Bu & McKeen, 2001; Frecklington, 2003; Huseman, Hatfield, & Yu, 1991; Yu, Taylor & Wong, 2003). The results did not confirm that salary is the *most* important motivator, but it was given a significant amount of importance. In addition, the respondents emphasized the importance of corporate activities and improving the general atmosphere in the workplace. Exploitation of workers was highly condemned in the stories. Furthermore, the respondents emphasized the importance of good co-operation and communication within the company.

The leadership style that was portrayed in the responses of the Chinese Millennials was not the stereotypical authoritarian Confucian style nor

was it the Western democratic style either. What stood out was a logical and pragmatic approach to leadership issues. Based on the empirical data, Chinese Millennials would investigate the situation at hand properly before acting and they try to consider many aspects of a problem. Further, Chinese Millennials have a humble attitude and they believe in continuous improvement within organizations. The notion that Chinese Millennials would be selfish and have low emotional intelligence (Yu, 2005) was not supported by the empirical findings. On the contrary, the respondents seem to want to create a fair working environment for all the workers. They show a high-degree of compassion towards people in weaker positions. Chinese Millennials want to treat their subordinates fairly and give them good salaries and humane working hours. They seemed to be very willing to listen to other people's opinions and showed a high degree of humbleness in the face of critique from both subordinates and other leaders.

Conclusion & Discussion

The findings support my main argument that the Chinese Millennial generation would prefer less hierarchical leadership style than what the studies of Hofstede have indicated. This means that the Confucian authoritarian leadership paradigm needs to be complemented with other theories. Just like leadership in general, Chinese leadership is a continuum of different kinds of theories and ideals. The ideal Chinese leader is not only the caring father-like figure of the Confucian tradition, but rather every major school of thought holds its own ideal (Fung, 1948, pp.30–37; Lee, 2000 in Chen & Lee, 2008, p.2). Heroic leadership theory, which has tried to define good and bad leadership, cannot be the only theory suited to the complex reality of organizations in China or elsewhere. Instead, we need to adapt the Chinese traditional thinking to a broader range of leadership research and practices: leadership practices should adapt to circumstances. Chinese culture emphasizes the notion of Yin-Yang, that is, the continuous change between the opposites. In Western management literature, there is also the notion of paradox or ambidexterity. In fact, the findings of having both high and low power distance indicators in the same responses correspond to the notion of organizational ambidexterity.

Some conclusions can be drawn on how the Chinese Millennials themselves want to be treated as subordinates or would behave as leaders. These practical implications are not only of value to the older generation of Chinese business leaders, but they are also of value to foreign managers, as one of the biggest issues for European foreign invested enterprises operating in China has been to get and keep a qualified workforce (EU Chamber of Commerce in China, 2017).

The finding that salary is not the most important motivator may indicate that the minimum wage in this sector in China has reached a high enough level for salary alone to no longer be enough to motivate the employees. The finding that exploitation of workers was not accepted indicates that organizations should further develop their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). In China, this might be challenging as economic growth often demands fast expansion and large profits at the expense of CSR (Buyaert, 2012). Nevertheless, properly implemented CSR results in lower employee turnover and better performance (see for example Vitaliano, 2010). Participative leadership that gives space for the autonomy and individuality of the workers (Ou, Tsui, Kiniki, Waldman, Xiao, & Song, 2014) could help to keep the Chinese Millennial employees motivated. However, managers should not exaggerate generational difference; flexibility and consistency are key (Tan, Wang & Zhang, 2017).

There are several limitations to this paper. Firstly, the method of empathy-based stories gives room for different interpretations of the data. The sample was not representative, for instance, as 72% of the respondents were female and only 28% were male, thus a gender dimension could also have been investigated. The results of this study would benefit from a large-scale survey being conducted. Secondly,

the sample population was very homogenous with regard to education. Peterson & Merunka (2014) note that a student sample can cause issues not only in terms of generalizability but also in terms of validity and reliability. This raises questions about the generalizability of the results on any population other than young and highly educated Chinese people. For future research, a similar study could be conducted with a population of similar aged Chinese who have only completed basic schooling. Lastly, the sample population was also very homogenous in terms of age, 18 to 23 year-olds born in the 1990s. The term Millennial is generally not used in China. Instead *post 80s* (八零后), *post 90s* (九零后), and *post 00s* (零零后) are the popular terms and stand for the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s cohorts. China's rapid economic development has led to significant differences between people born only one decade apart. It might be that the results of this study only apply to the 1990s Chinese cohorts.

In spite of these limitations, the results are in line with the common statements made about the Millennials across the globe, that they tend to be ethically and socially conscious and they want to feel free to express themselves.

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Book Review

Taking Back Philosophy – A Multicultural Manifesto.
Van Norden, Bryan W. New York: Columbia University Press, 2017, 248 pp., ISBN: 978-0231184366 (hard-cover)

"This is the intervention we have been waiting for!" "What is new?" "I got stuck by page 10 because I found his self-righteousness insufferable..." friends and colleagues declared when I brought up Bryan W. Van Norden's *Taking Back Philosophy: A Multicultural Manifesto*. Van Norden, a highly accomplished scholar in Chinese and comparative philosophy, holds professorships at three institutions – Yale-NUS in Singapore, Wuhan University in China, and Vassar College in the US. Intentionally partisan and polemic, his latest book is deliberately "cheeky" and occasionally sardonic; it can perhaps best be summarized as "Philosophy must diversify or die" (Van Norden, 2017, p. 8). No surprise then that the book has elicited such divergent and often strong reactions from its readers. For those who want to get a sense of current academic discussions about the politics of departmentalisation and disciplining of philosophy in Western universities, it is a good read.

The book germinated from an opinion piece Van Norden and Jay L. Garfied (a long-time collaborator of Van Norden) did for *The New York Times*. On the first day alone, the piece garnered eight hundred replies, and later, thousands more on philosophy sites. Many of these comments were vitriolic in nature (Garfield, 2017, p. xii). Clearly, the article entitled "If Philosophy Won't Diversify, Let's Call It What It Really Is" had hit a nerve. Van Norden and Garfield argued for a restructuring of philosophy departments (especially those located in the West) into multicultural ones such that these departments would equally *include less commonly taught philosophies* (LCTP). That is, philosophies other than the canonical Western ones. If this cannot be achieved, they argued, we must end the double standard of Eurocentric philosophy with its universal pretence, and call philosophy departments which do not teach and research anything other than Western canonical philosophy "Anglo-European Philosophical Studies" (Garfield and Van Norden, 2016).

Taking Back Philosophy elaborates this stand across its five chapters. Chapter One is a manifesto for a multicultural philosophy; it argues that there is value in including "non-Western" philosophy in the curriculum. Chapter Two illustrates how the tradition of Chinese thought is philosophical; that it too deals with common themes such as identity, altruism etc., and puts it into dialogue with other philosophies. Chapter Three shows how US President Trump's wall and the walls between philosophies are related; that creating divisions and othering is part of a larger narrative. Chapter Four concentrates on how philosophy can be vocationally and politically useful; Van Norden especially criticises Marco Rubio's view that "[w]e need more welders and less philosophers" (it should be noted that Rubio has since expressed that he was wrong). And Chapter Five argues that philosophy is a guide to life for everyone, and not only the activity of academics in their ivory towers.

In the book, Van Norden describes philosophy departments' unwillingness to engage with LCTP as "a broader pattern of xenophobic, chauvinistic, nationalistic, and racist efforts to separate "us" from "them"" (Van Norden, 2017, p. 84). Strong words these are, and while most philosophy departments in the West do exclusively only deal with Western philosophy, with the exemption of common bigotry,

I share Jonardon Ganeri's hesitation to call it racist (Ganeri, 2018), writing as I am from Europe where most universities here live up to the example of Van Norden's critique. It is clear that even a cursory look at the department websites of universities uncovers very few full-time employee who do any research on "non-Western" philosophy. These departments, Van Norden argues, also tend to be white and male, and the philosophy departments of many European universities confirm this. However, is this enough reason to warrant them as structurally racist? Rather, as Ganeri writes, is it perchance the difficulty to relate to tool kits from other philosophical traditions which gives ground to the problem of parochialism, and deters the person who solely does mainstream Western philosophy? Couched as these other tool kits are in disparate languages, canons and texts other than the "standard" (Ganeri, 2018), the problem becomes more visibly focused.

Van Norden's remedy to the state of things is to equate multiculturalism's intimate link to the notion of diversity. But what does Van Norden mean with multicultural? Unfortunately, he does not detail the varying readings of multicultural that have been available for some time now, which makes his own notion somewhat unclear and hence difficult to grasp. Steve Fuller even questions if Van Norden's conception of non-Western cultures may risk becoming the West's Other (Fuller, 2018, pp. 157-8). Van Norden cannot be faulted for essentialising non-Western cultures, he aptly demonstrates how Chinese culture has changed over time. His book does stress that Chinese philosophy is different, and therefore it could, and should, be put in dialogue with, for example, Western philosophy. This reminds me of Paul Deussen's remark from 1907 that difference "furnished us [Europeans] with the strongest argument in favour of devoting ourselves to it [Indian Philosophy] all the more." (Deussen, 1907, p. 3).

In his reply to Fuller, Van Norden addresses many of the criticisms Fuller raises, yet he does not answer this particular challenge of difference (Van Norden, 2018). The question I wish Van Norden had explored more, which is perhaps outside the scope of a non-academic book, is that which Jin Yuelin posed in 1930: "Is Chinese Philosophy the history of Chinese philosophy, or is it the history of philosophy in China?" (author's translation of: "所谓"中国哲学"是中国哲学的史呢？还是在中国的哲学史呢?" (Jin, 2007, p. 203). Alternatively, as Bhagat Oinam phrased it more than 85 years later, "'Philosophy in India' or 'Indian Philosophy': Some Post-Colonial Questions" (Oinam, 2018).

Van Norden contends that philosophy departments should teach students different traditions of philosophy, multi-cultures of philosophy, and then make them talk to each other. This approach is "compelling, infuriating but ultimately unsatisfying" as Alex Sager states (Sager, 2018), with Alexandra S. Ilieva Ilieva adding that "it does not go far enough" (Ilieva, 2018, p. 3). A more radical approach would be Ganeri's, who writes that the *manufactured notion of culture* should be altogether scrapped (Ganeri, 2018) without, I would add, losing each concept's situatedness in a particular milieu. This would entail thinking about *confluence* rather than the *comparative* sense that Mark Sideritis would be watchful of (Sideritis, 2017); in other words, an approach one could envision as a transcultural style of philosophy.

In hindsight many things can be said about the famous philologist and Orientalist Max Müller in contrast to the Indologist and philosopher Deussen, his contemporary, whose position I earlier likened to Van Norden's. I fancy Müller got this one right,

> [a]nd if hitherto no one would have called himself a philosopher who had not read and studied the works of Plato and Aristotle, of Des Cartes [*sic*] and Spinoza, of Locke, Hume, and Kant in the original, I hope that the time will come when no one will claim that name who is not acquainted at least with the two prominent systems of ancient Indian philosophy the Vedānta and the Sāmkhya.
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> (Müller, 1919, p. xvi)

An asymmetry of ignorance in any form cannot form the basis of any interconnected world, especially in the realm of thought.

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