

## Session III: China and the World

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### *The Development of World History Studies in China in Recent Years: A Survey*

I will summarize the development of world history studies <sup>\*</sup> in China since the beginning of the new 21st Century. During this period world history studies in China have had relatively great achievements. According to the available statistics, during the period 2001 to 2005, more than 500 books on world history and about 3500 related articles were published in China — on average about 100 books and about 700 articles a year. It is a big number, but of course, we can't appraise the academic results only by quantity. Nevertheless, if we look at the academic results by quality, we also can see great progress.

Since the beginning of the 21st Century more and more books on general world history are being published. As we know, in the second half of the 20th century no book on general world history written by Chinese historians was published in China, except a popular textbook for university students edited by Professors ZHAO Yiliang and WU Yujin. Although some books on periods of world history, or on the history of certain countries did appear. Nevertheless in this new Century the situation is changing. A big series of 38 volumes of World History edited by the Institute of World History, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences will come out soon. There have already been some books published in this area<sup>1</sup>.

An obvious characteristic of these 21st century world history studies is that progress can be seen in almost every area, especially it was in ancient history. This was always a very difficult area in world history due to the languages and materials, but the situation was changed. According to partial statistics, during the period from 2001 to 2005 over 100 more books and almost 400 articles were published in this area. A level of publication is without parallel in non-western countries except Japan. If we keep in mind that in China there were fewer than 200 specialists in this area, we can appreciate how difficult it was to achieve these results.

If we look at the contents of these publications we could find some shortcomings. As before the publications have been focused on the ancient West, especially on the Antiquity, much more than on the ancient Orient. For example, more than 150 articles, almost half of all articles on ancient history; and more than 50 books, almost half of all books on ancient history, have focused on Ancient Greece; and over 60 articles and about 40 books on ancient Rome.

In the area of Antiquity studies the range and depth of these publications is increasing. Scholars were concerned with different topics, such as the general outline of ancient world<sup>2</sup> social stratum system in ancient states<sup>3</sup> ancient Greek philosophy and history<sup>4</sup>, ancient Greek rites<sup>5</sup>, ancient Greek women<sup>6</sup>, the times and society in reflection of Homer's epic<sup>7</sup>, the Hellenistic time<sup>8</sup>, the populace in the early Rome<sup>9</sup>, republic and monarchy in ancient Rome<sup>10</sup>, ancient Roman culture<sup>11</sup>, architecture<sup>12</sup>, women<sup>13</sup>, corps<sup>14</sup>, history of literature<sup>15</sup>, and so on. Among these books some were monographs, some — edited books, some — pamphlets. There are also some translations<sup>16</sup>.

Although ancient Orient studies went slower paced than those on the ancient West, there are some achievements. According to statistics during 2001 to 2005 more than 20 books were published in this area<sup>17</sup>. In 2006 some monographs were published<sup>18</sup>.

In addition to books about 70 articles on the ancient history of the Orient were published, among them about 30 articles — on ancient Egypt, about 20 — on Mesopotamia, about 20 — on ancient India. Especially important is that some young scholars are able to understand and use the original ancient languages for writing papers, such as articles on ancient Egyptian Hieroglyphics<sup>19</sup>, on cuneiform characters, Assyriology, Jewish Dead Sea Scrolls, Hittite, ancient ethnic problems etc.<sup>20</sup>

In comparison with ancient world history studies, mediaeval studies are relatively underdeveloped either in research results or in training qualified personnel. However even in this area some achievements have been made. For example, we can see that the research scale and scope of research topics were widened, more new methods and techniques were adopted, research and teaching forces and centers were more reasonably distributed throughout the whole country, etc.

If we looked at the publications we can see new subjects and topics such as church law,<sup>21</sup> social transformation<sup>22</sup>, stratum of merchant<sup>23</sup>, common law<sup>24</sup>, feudal monarchical power<sup>25</sup>, migrant problem<sup>26</sup>, knight's life<sup>27</sup>, formation of modern state<sup>28</sup>, etc. In addition to books a lot of articles focusing on political, economical and social history in Western Europe have been published. Among them are some relatively new topics, such as the remarriage of widows in Europe<sup>29</sup>, noble women's cultivation oneself according to religious doctrine<sup>30</sup>, different questions concerning religions<sup>31</sup>, and so on.

Apart from Western Europe there has been some progress in the area of the study of Byzantine, Eastern Europe and Asia. For example, a monograph on Byzantine history has published<sup>32</sup>, there are some books on the history of Eastern Europe and Slavs<sup>33</sup>, and some books on Asian history<sup>34</sup>.

Modern and contemporary history studies always has been a focus point in world history. According to partial statistics, from 2001 to 2005, more than 50 books and 600 articles have been published. Several books on general modern and contemporary history have come out<sup>35</sup>. Some authors of general history books adopted different points of view, so their works possess different emphasis. For example, some investigated the development of capitalism<sup>36</sup>, some emphasized the evolution and changes of history<sup>37</sup>, some looked at history from the view of exchanges between civilizations<sup>38</sup>, other emphasized the inspiration of history<sup>39</sup>, and so on.

Concerning regional and country history, the emphasis is still on Western European and North American history. Many books have been published on the history of the United Kingdom<sup>40</sup>, Germany<sup>41</sup>, France<sup>42</sup>, the integration of Europe<sup>43</sup>, USA<sup>44</sup>, and Canada<sup>45</sup> etc. In these books we can see the new research area and topics, new methods, new materials, new points of view and the growth of young researchers. For example, urban history, history of population, ethnic history, cultural history, Nazism, community development etc. are relatively new topics. Although environment history is a very new area there have already been some published research books<sup>46</sup>.

The year of 2005 was marked the 60th anniversary of the ending of World War II, which reverberated in historical studies. In 2005 a lot of works devoted to the war were published, either about the whole process of war<sup>47</sup>, or on certain fighting country or front<sup>48</sup>, also on China's war against Japanese aggression<sup>49</sup>.

Another focus point in world history studies since the beginning of the new Century is the history of Russia and Eastern Europe. It is closely related to the dramatic changes within the Soviet Union and Eastern European Socialist countries in late 1990s. In addition to a number of articles, many books were published, among them ones dealing specially with the rise and fall of the Soviet Union<sup>50</sup>, others concern different problems of Soviet and Russian history<sup>51</sup>. An important achievement by Chinese historians was the collecting and editing of the historical archives and materials such as Select Archives of Soviet History in 34 vols<sup>52</sup>. Many works are devoted to Russian history<sup>53</sup> and Eastern European history<sup>54</sup>.

In the area of history of international relations historians have also published many books<sup>55</sup>.

Since 2001 Chinese historians have made great progress in researches on Asian, African and Latin-American history. According to available statistics, during 2001 to 2005, more than 160 academic books, and about 400 articles have been published in Asian history. Correspondingly, the traditional history of North-East Asia and South-East Asia and South Asia were emphasized. East Asia history has attracted the attention of many historians. In 2006, first book on the General History of East Asia was published in China<sup>56</sup>, in addition to a number of works on Japan, India and other regions<sup>57</sup>.

In this new Century Chinese historians have taken more efforts to do researches in the history of Western and central Asia, especially their modern and contemporary history. Some related books have been published,<sup>58</sup> a general history of Central Asia in 3 vols. has been published by the Xinjiang People's Publishing House.

The history of Africa was usually an under-developed area, but since 2001 historians have made progress in its study, focusing on its two geographic ends, namely Egypt and South Africa. There have been more books published on South African history than before<sup>59</sup>. As to Egypt we have mentioned above. Moreover, some popular books on African history have appeared<sup>60</sup>.

In the area of Latin-American history there have been some new works, among them ones on general history of Latin-America<sup>61</sup>, others dealing with special topics<sup>62</sup>.

I have described the main developments in world history studies in China after 2001. There are achievements in every area of world history and Chinese historians have taken great strides. At the same time, we can see deficiencies. In future we must do our best to push further the development of world history and to achieve more results. Strengthening the international communication with scholars from different countries is an important measure for promoting the development of world history studies.

\* In China world history usually does not include the history of China.

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4. 宋继杰主编：《Being 与西方哲学传统》( *Being and the Tradition of Western Philosophy*, edited by SONG Jijie ), 河北大学出版社, 2002年；晏绍详：《古代希腊历史与学术史初学集》( YAN Shaoxiang, *History of Ancient Greek History and Academia* ), 湖北人民出版社, 2003年.
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7. 晏绍详：《荷马社会研究》( YAN Shaoxiang, *A Study of Homer's Society* ), 上海三联书店, 2006年.
8. 陈恒：《希腊化研究》( CHEN Heng, *A Study of Hellenism* ), 商务印书馆, 2006年.
9. 胡玉娟：《古罗马早期平民问题研究》( WU Yujuan, *Research on the Populace in Early Ancient Rome* ), 北京师范大学出版社, 2002年.
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  29. 参见俞金尧: 《中世纪晚期和近代早期欧洲的寡妇改嫁》( YU Jinyao, “The Remarrying of Widow in Europe in Late Middle Ages and Early

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