

# Globalization, Global History and Local Identity in 'Greater China'

Q. Edward Wang

## Globalization, Global History and Local Identity in "Greater China"

Q. Edward Wang[1]

I would like to start with by defining what I mean by "Greater China." It is a term used commonly in economics and investment communities around the world. It includes mainland China (hereafter China), Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan (Singapore, given its sizable Chinese community, is often included), despite the uneasiness of some Taiwanese scholars about the concept. At a cultural level, "greater China" corresponds with the term "cultural China," coined by Tu Wei-ming during the 1990s when he spoke about the revival of Confucianism in the postwar period, arguing that instead of an impediment, Confucian values and ideals actually paved the way for the advance of economic expansion in many East Asian countries and regions.[2] This economic expansion continued subsequently powered by globalization. Here, I offer a brief survey of the differing interests in, and engagements with, the study of globalization and global history in mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan. I argue that in the face of globalization, each of these regions developed distinct strategies to perceive and interpret its

multifaceted impact. Thus, though I use the term "Greater China," I intend to emphasize the very different approaches to the regional and the global in the case of China, Hong Kong and Taiwan.



**Statue of Confucius at Confucius Temple, Beijing**

Indeed, though Chinese, in its written form, is the lingua franca, and in recent

years extensive exchanges have occurred among the three, there have been notable differences in the ways in which scholars in China, Hong Kong and Taiwan have assessed the impact of globalization. These differences reflect the three regions' historical experiences and their current positions in the world. They also point to different expectations on the part of scholars and, to a lesser degree, the leaders of the three regions with respect to globalization. China is the most enthusiastic among the three, followed closely by Taiwan and then by Hong Kong. In China, (*quanqiu hua*; globalization) has become a catchphrase in media as well as in political and academic discourse. In fact, the Chinese embraced "globalization" even before the phrase "globalization" captured much attention and its study became an academic field around the world. During the 1980s when China had just opened its door to the outside world, Zhao Ziyang (1919-2005), China's premier and later party general secretary, instructed the party and the people that there was no choice other than pushing forward with economic reform. Inspired perhaps by the futuristic study of Alvin Toffler,<sup>[3]</sup> Zhao believed that the whole world has become a "global village" (*diqu cun*) and that China should seek to become a member.



### **Toffler interviewed by People's Daily Correspondent**

If China failed to grasp the opportunity, he warned, it could well lose the global position it had begun to achieve in recent years. In the wake of the Tian'anmen Incident (1989), Zhao lost his post in the party and the government. However, the idea that China should seek to engage with the outside world and catch up with the world's industrial leaders did not wane. China's economic expansion continued well into the twenty-first century, despite the death of Deng Xiaoping (1904-1997), the orchestrator of China's open-door policy from 1978 to 1997 when he passed away. As Zhao Ziyang disappeared from center stage of China's political arena, the phrase "global village" also faded away. But in its place appeared "globalization," which became a popular, and generally also positive, catchword for the Chinese to this day. Up to the present, some 155 Chinese doctoral dissertations deal with the topic, ranging from political science, economics and international relations to sociology, education, and cultural

studies. Using “globalization” as the keyword to search in the Chinese Academic Journal Database (CNKI), which contains journal articles from 1979 to the present, I found over 20,000 articles that address globalization’s impact in a broad range of areas: from fine arts, architecture, tourism and linguistics to international finance, business and educational administration, political economy and geopolitics, urban development and religious studies. Interestingly, an overwhelming majority of the articles (19,840) were published after 1994. Hence, it is no exaggeration to say that from the wide breadth of topics (some quite unexpected) covered, globalization has touched upon every aspect of life in today’s China. Insofar as historical study is concerned, about 360 articles were found in the database during the same period, of which 142 were published after 1994. They will be discussed below.

Globalization has also aroused great interest in Taiwan. In Taiwan’s academic journal database, spanning 1999 to today, 1,510 articles discuss globalization. They also covered a broad range of topics, from preserving indigenous culture and customs, religious studies and Chinese and foreign language education to architectural design, agricultural development and tourist industry, though few relate to historical study. The impact of globalization has also been noted in Hong Kong. Using the journal database at Chinese University of Hong Kong and the same search tool, I found that since 1980 413 articles have

addressed globalization. (Many of the articles have been published in the last decade.) These articles, like those published on the mainland and Taiwan, also deal with a broad range of topics, though compared with those by mainland and Taiwan scholars, they focus more narrowly on international finance and business management. One caveat. Many of the articles appearing in Hong Kong journals were not authored by scholars of Hong Kong origin, or by Hong Kong residents, and many which address globalization did not pertain to its impact on Hong Kong. Some take a broad Chinese perspective whereas others treat the subject from a comparative, cross-cultural perspective. Similarly, articles about Hong Kong or by Hong Kong scholars on globalization have appeared in mainland journals. After Hong Kong was returned to the PRC in 1997, there was a notable increase of scholars who grew up on the mainland or Taiwan and came to teach in Hong Kong after receiving advanced degrees in Europe and North America. In addition, there have been a number of foreign scholars of non-Chinese origin teaching in Hong Kong. (The number of foreign scholars teaching in Taiwan has also been on the rise, whereas in China, the number is much smaller.) Thus, it has become more and more difficult to identify a distinct Hong Kong academic community. (In the future, given close ties with the mainland, one might say that there would only be “an academic community in Hong Kong” instead of “a Hong Kong academic community.”) Nonetheless, there is a marked difference with respect not only

to the level of interest but also the expression of such interest in globalization among scholars in China, Taiwan and Hong Kong.

Second, China differs from both Taiwan and Hong Kong with respect to its expectations concerning globalization. To many Chinese scholars who write about globalization and China's future development, globalization represents a new stage of development in worldwide modernization, in which China's rapid economic expansion from 1978 has been an integral part. From the perspective of Marx's historical materialism, as a new stage of modernization, globalization is a corollary of the development in world history. It constitutes "historical necessity" (*lishi biranxing*), as the title of one article suggests.<sup>[4]</sup> The author, Liu Bo, argues that though the idea of "globalism" (*quanqiu zhuyi*) had appeared earlier in various cultures, the process of globalization did not begin until the 1960s and the 1970s, marked by the "information revolution" buoyed by technological innovations such as the Internet. Globalization has reduced the autonomy of nation-states and strengthened interdependence among various regions of the world. No country or region, Liu contends, can be immune from these changes. In short, globalization is an ineluctable historical development.

Liu proclaims that globalization, as a transitional stage, leads ineluctably to the ultimate triumph of socialism, since, according to Marx, socialism is the stage of social development that supersedes

capitalism. However, few articles explicitly connect globalization with socialism or contend that globalization paves the way for the advance of socialism. Indeed, mention of socialism in the globalization literature is sparse. But the idea nevertheless lurks within the argumentation. For instance, in an article entitled "Interpreting 'socialism with Chinese characteristics' from the perspective of globalization," the authors make two interesting arguments. One is that it was in the course of an earlier globalization that socialism became possible, and that it became a viable path for China. The other is that only through globalization could socialism in China come to achieve "Chinese characteristics." That is, globalization made Chinese socialism more distinctive. First, citing Deng Xiaoping's directives, the authors state that while he imported market economy into China, Deng also hoped that China's economic development would benefit the majority of the people, hence avoiding the wide gap between the rich and poor in capitalist countries. Second, globalization does not mean homogenization. Rather, it encourages alternative ways of modernization. Deng's economic policy after 1978 presents precisely such a model. Third, China's modernization is an alternative model because it draws on Confucian tradition, which in turn also underlines its "Chinese characteristics."<sup>[5]</sup> Taking a more cautious tone, the other article states that though globalization poses a challenge to China in its endeavor to modernize, it also provides an



“opportunity” (*jiyu*), since globalization requires that China open its door widely and engage actively with other regions and countries in developing its economy. As an opportunity, the author puts it succinctly, globalization facilitates the goal that the Chinese government has pursued since 1978, which is “to use capitalism to develop socialism” (*liyong ziben zhuyi, fazhan shehui zhuyi*).<sup>[6]</sup>

To be sure, not all publications on globalization appearing in mainland China are enthusiastic about its impact. Some scholars discuss the “negative influence” (*xiaoji yingxiang*) of globalization which undermines national pride among Chinese youth.<sup>[7]</sup> Others see the diminished role of nation-states in the face of globalization as requiring new strategies for China.<sup>[8]</sup> Among those who express caution about embracing globalization, a consensus seems to be that though globalization emphasizes and promotes interactions among various regions of the world, Western countries dominate the process. To a large degree, some point out bluntly, globalization is nothing but a foil for Westernization. As globalization allows countries like China to enter the world stage, they warn, it also facilitates the advance of Western cultural colonialism around the world. There is, therefore, an urgent need for China to develop effective strategies safeguarding the “security of Chinese culture” (*Zhongguo wenhua anquan*). These strategies include strengthening CCP leadership, enlarging Chinese cultural tradition, and promoting national pride and cohesiveness.<sup>[9]</sup> But by and

large, mainland scholars embrace globalization, even while noting the challenges it poses to Chinese national identity, for they do try to distinguish it from Westernization.<sup>[10]</sup> The key difference between the two, according to these scholars, has a good deal to do with China’s relations with them. China was forced to accept Westernization, which exerted impact through the course of modern Chinese history beginning with the Opium War (1839-42).



### The first Opium War

By contrast, owing to Deng Xiaoping’s open-door policy, China takes an active part in globalization. Thus, Zhao Lu periodizes the formation of Chinese cultural and national identity in two periods in relation with globalization. Prior to the 1990s, it was notable for its inner directed and conservative character, whereas since the 1990s it has become open, progressive and outward oriented, thanks to China’s active participation in globalization.<sup>[11]</sup> Needless to say, mainland scholars’ positive attitude toward globalization has much to do with their assessment of the economic expansion orchestrated by the Chinese government. As Deng’s open-

door policy was instituted in 1978, coinciding with the tide of globalization, and its policy has appeared successful in promoting economic development in subsequent decades, mainland scholars tend to view globalization as an opportunity for China to regain its position of importance in the world, in contrast to the initial decades of the People's Republic when China was isolated and suffered from economic stagnation.

Among scholars in Taiwan, globalization seems to have also presented an opportunity, though it differs markedly in its connotation. Taiwan's economic development coincided with globalization and paved the way for Taiwan's democratization from 1987. This democratization has also resulted in self-conscious efforts to transcend the encompassing notion of "Chinese nationality" (*Zhonghua minzu*) and highlight its multifaceted manifestations in Taiwan, notably the ethnic diversity of its population comprised of peoples of Hokkien [Minnan], Hakka, other mainlanders and aboriginal peoples. Indeed, since the 1980s, "globalization" in Taiwan's public discourse has been accompanied by growing "Taiwanese consciousness" (*Taiwan yishi*). Many of the studies by scholars in Taiwan address the impact of globalization from the perspective of "Taiwan identity" or "Taiwanese consciousness," though they differ in their approach and findings. Consider two essays, one by Liao Binghui (Ping-huei) and the other by Yang Du (Tu), both noted essayists.[12] From the

perspective of Taiwan's history, which is notable for immigration and colonization, both date the beginning of globalization from the sixteenth century when Taiwan became gradually known to the Chinese, Japanese, Portuguese and Dutch. By comparison, mainland scholars generally discuss globalization as a recent event. (We shall discuss the periodization by mainland historians below.) Yang and Liao view Taiwan's history as "globalization" writ large. However, for Liao, "globalization" has given rise to a distinct "Taiwanese identity," for globalization must experience a process of "localization" (*dihua*) and/or "re-localization" (*zaidihua*). Globalization, he concludes, is not antithetical to strengthening Taiwanese identity; rather, the more one promotes Taiwanese identity, the more visible globalization becomes because globalization also generates interest in local cultures.[13] For Yang, if globalization has shaped the historical development of Taiwan, then the very term "Taiwanese identity" needs to be interrogated, for it has continued to be enriched and expanded. It is at once an elusive and inclusive term because globalization has continued to shape Taiwan society. As a result, Taiwanese identity or consciousness and globalization have not been locked in two dichotomous poles. Rather, Yang maintains, the two are so interdependent that if one emphasizes Taiwanese identity, it will lead to the negation of the interests of other ethnic groups and the diverse cultural traditions that shape Taiwan. He hopes and expects the islanders to continue their open and

tolerant cultural attitude, rather than being circumscribed by attempts to promote one identity, which have been grounded, invariably, in the cultural and historical experience of one or two particular ethnic groups.[14] Neither essay discusses China's influences in Taiwan, which is common in cultural discourses on Taiwan identity in recent years, for the very reason that to emphasize a Taiwan identity is to seek to separate it from its Chinese roots. Many see that the promotion of Taiwan identity is predicated on excluding the Chinese elements in Taiwan, or "de-sinicization" (*qu Zhongguo hua*).[15] However, by stressing the need for open-mindedness, Yang seems to argue rather that the formation of Taiwan identity should also be receptive to Chinese influences.

Nonetheless, Taiwanese scholars today have made considerable efforts to seek a transcultural and transnational understanding of the island's past and present. That is, Taiwan is no longer seen as a microcosm of Chinese culture as in the period between 1949 and 1987, but rather as a product of globalization wherein a variety of cultures vied for influence.

In Hong Kong, the issue of transcultural identity has also drawn much attention. Indeed, one may argue that it has been most visible and acute. If globalization has shaped the history of Taiwan since the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the same can be said about Hong Kong's history at least since the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Yet unlike Taiwan, where attempts to construct a distinct multicultural identity at a national level

have been visible in recent decades, the Hong Kong identity has by and large been formed at a sub-national level, characterized by "hybridity," "in-between-ness," "marginality" and the "third space," all of which are associated closely with recent patterns of globalization.[16] From 1997 when Hong Kong reverted to Chinese rule, all these characteristics have encountered the rush of "nationalization," with a clear goal of integrating Hong Kong not only politically but also culturally into China. On the one hand, it is clear that this "nationalization" cannot be achieved by ignoring Hong Kong's historical heritage and the complex formation of the Hong Kong identity, for the birth of Hong Kong and its ascendance as an important financial and trade center in both Asia and the world has been intertwined with the trend of globalization, one in which mainland China has been an active participant in recent years. Yet on the other hand, globalization has paradoxically simultaneously promoted homogeneity and heterogeneity. In Taiwan's case, the latter is referred to as a process of "localization," whereas in Hong Kong after 1997, this process has become one of "nationalization," in which Hong Kongers begin to relearn and regain their "Chineseness." Hence, globalization, localization and nationalization are all present in Hong Kong today.[17]



### Hong Kong's 1997 "handover" from British to Chinese rule

Recent changes in Hong Kong's movie industry reveal the interplay of the global, the national and the local. Before 1997, the industry produced on average 300 movies annually. After 1997, production experienced a noticeable decline. At present, annual production is in double digits. But this decline belies the fact that Hong Kong movie directors have been as busy as ever, making movies not only in Hollywood and Hong Kong but also on the mainland. Indeed, China's movie market has become more and more internationalized. Hong Kong directors, now perceived as Chinese, have successfully ridden this wave. By and large, their entry has been well received by the mainland audience and welcomed by the government, for it is seen as a part of the "nationalization" referred to above. At the same time, Hong Kong directors have also left indelible marks in Hollywood. What these directors have achieved are examples of global collaboration, pulling together Hollywood techniques, Chinese stories, local resources as well as a cross-section

of actors.<sup>[18]</sup> For instance, *The Battle of Wits* (*Mogong*; 2006) was directed by Zhang Zhiliang (Jacob Cheung), a Hong Kong director, based on a Japanese *manga* series by Hideki Mori. It portrays how a Moist tactician named Ge Li, played by Liu Dehua (Andy Lau), a famous Hong Kong actor, who helped defend the State of Liang in China's Warring States period (476-221 BCE). In addition to Liu Dehua, mainland Chinese and Korean actors played important roles.

A more recent example is the making of the *Red Cliff* (*Chibi*; 2008-2009) by Wu Yusen (John Woo), another famous Hong Kong director who enjoys a reputation in Hollywood. Again, it is based on a Chinese story, describing the crucial battle in Chibi during the Three Kingdoms period (220-280) where the alliance between the Shu and Wu successfully fended off the advance of the Wei, resulting in the division of China proper among the three kingdoms. As Wu Yusen is now based in the US, it is technically an American movie, though its actors are from Asia, including Liang Jiawei (Chiu-wai, Tony Leung), Takeshi Kaneshiro, Zhang Fengyi, Zhao Wei, Zhang Zhen (Chang Chen) and Lin Zhiling (Chi-ling), representing Hong Kong, Japan, mainland China and Taiwan respectively. It has also screened in all these places and been well received. By portraying a Chinese story (the battle in Chibi is well known), these movies can be seen as an integral part of the process of "nationalization," for prior to 1997, Hong Kong movies mostly drew on aspects of



the city's urban life and aimed for entertainment. Yet on the other hand, the making of these movies and their successes have also benefited from the past experience. Though supposedly a serious war movie, the *Red Cliff* has some dialogues between historical figures that are anachronistic and clearly designed to entertain, not to reflect history. This has caused some scholarly criticisms, but has not hurt its box office sales.

Lastly, I discuss briefly the study of global history in China, Taiwan and Hong Kong. Given the high level of interest in globalization on the mainland, global history became a new subfield of historical study that has attracted a good deal of attention among historians. The Capital Normal University in Beijing has been a new center, though other places such as Wuhan University and the Research Institute of World History at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences have also assembled a team of researchers and conducted research on the subject.<sup>[19]</sup> A glimpse of their publications on global history, a total of about seventy articles, reveals that mainland scholars tend to view globalization as a new phase in world historical development and associate their research on global history with previous studies of modernization. That is, though some works emphasize the fact that globalization is a recent event, beginning in the postwar years or even in the 1980s, many others view it as a long process coinciding with the emergence of modern capitalism in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Some scholars thus have made efforts to trace

the origin of globalization by linking its rise with modernization. Drawing on Marxist theory, they maintain that with the emergence of capitalism in the West in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, world history gradually resulted in integrated development or "world history" in the real sense. The forces behind this were Westernization or modernization; the former refers to the influence of the Western-dominated capitalist world system and the latter to the efforts by many countries to catch up with the modern West. If inspired by the Western model, the end results were not necessarily its clones. In a word, mainland scholars generally see Westernization, modernization and globalization as three sequential stages of development in world history; globalization is the most recent occurrence.<sup>[20]</sup>

Drawing on this understanding, some publications point to three waves of globalization in the world from the perspective of China's reaction to them. The first wave began in the early modern period, to which China, during its Ming and Qing periods, had some exposure, though mainland scholars are less confident than, say, Andre Gunder Frank, in arguing that China was then the epicenter of world economic development. The second wave began in the nineteenth century, associated with Western colonialism and imperialism and resulting in China's victimization and humiliation, highlighted by defeats in the Opium War of 1839-42, the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-95, and the Boxer Rebellion

of 1900. By contrast, mainland scholars believe that during the third wave of globalization from the 1970s, thanks to the open-door policy, China has played not only an active but possibly even a leadership role in globalization. Their interest in global history and enthusiasm for globalization therefore have been buoyed by China's economic achievements of recent decades. This interest and enthusiasm have extended, as I see it, their support of current government policy on the one hand and their hope for extending such policy on the other.[21]

This understanding connecting globalization with modernization seems to be shared by some historians in Taiwan. Compared with the mainland, Taiwanese historians have not made a systematic attempt to integrate the study of global history into the current history curriculum. Yet Qiu Pengsheng (Ch'iu P'eng-sheng), an economic historian at the Institute of History and Philology at Academia Sinica, has recently designed a course taught at Taiwan University, on "Social Change in Ming and Qing China and Early Globalization," which is clearly inspired by the works of Gunder Frank and Kenneth Pomeranz. Frank and Pomeranz's works garnered attention in Taiwan given the fact that Ming-Qing China has always been a popular field among Taiwanese historians. The recent trend of Taiwan studies also fueled this popularity as Taiwan's history was intertwined with both dynasties.[22]

But interest in Taiwan studies, or "*bentuhua yanjiu*" (study of

nativization),[23] has also aimed to transcend the convention of interpreting Taiwan's history from a Chinese perspective. That is, many historians seek to resituate Taiwan in a broader regional and global context than its connection with the mainland. In recent years, efforts have been made among Taiwanese historians to reposition Taiwan in East Asia and describe its historical trajectory as such. Interestingly, these efforts have been carried out by scholars of different political perspectives. Wu Micha, a history professor at Cheng-kung University, for example, is known for his activism in promoting Taiwan's independence. He specializes in the modern history of Taiwan, namely historical change during the Qing (1644-1911) when Taiwan became a Chinese province. Having collaborated with Wakabayashi Masahiro of Tokyo University, Wu has launched a project to challenge and overcome the tradition of Chinese nationalist historiography, which in Taiwan under Guomindang rule had meant emphasis on Taiwan as an integral part of China. This project has resulted in two anthologies: *Essays on Taiwan's Multi-circled Modernization* and *Transcending the Boundary of Taiwanese History: Dialogue with East Asian History*, which address Taiwan's historical linkages with its East Asian neighbors, especially with Japan. In his preface to the second book, Wu Micha stresses that though it goes without saying that historians of Taiwan should note multifaceted external influences on the island's history, few historians have attempted to do so in the past. In

studying Taiwan's colonization, for example, most scholars focused on the immigrants from China, but not elsewhere. Nor did they try to compare the immigration with other migration movements in the Qing realm and beyond. In particular, as shown in the contents of these two works, Wu and his former colleague hope to explore the (positive?) impact of Japanese colonial rule in promoting Taiwan's modernization, or to analyze the nature of "colonial modernity."<sup>[24]</sup>



### Dutch ship in Taiwan in the 16<sup>th</sup> century

Huang Junjie (Chun-chieh), Wu's colleague at NTU, has made a similar attempt, though he is no Taiwan separatist. Having cofounded the Center for the Hermeneutic Studies of Confucian Classics in East Asia at NTU back in the late 1990s, Huang, a Chinese intellectual historian, has pursued an interest in the development of neo-Confucianism in China (including Taiwan), Korea and Japan. The Center has also organized several international symposiums on

related topics; Huang himself edited and authored several books, of which *The Study of East Asian Confucianism: Retrospect and Prospect* (2005) and *East Asian Confucianism: the Dialectics of Classics and Interpretations* (2007) are representative in introducing a new concept of "East Asian Confucianism" (*Dongya ruxue*).<sup>[25]</sup> This emphasis on the exchanges among cultures of East Asia, viewed as a region with a cultural entity of its own, is also evident in the work of Chen Guangxing (Ch'en Kuan-hsing), a communications and cultural studies professor at Taiwan's Tsing-hua University. One of the founding editors of *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, an English-language journal devoted to the study of postcolonial studies and critical theory in East Asia, Chen is known for his relentless criticism of Taiwanese cultural nationalism, an offshoot of the separatist movement on the island of recent decades.<sup>[26]</sup> Chen rejects the attempt of some Taiwanese scholars to substitute Taiwanese nationalism for Chinese nationalism, in hopes of bolstering and justifying Taiwan's claim to independence. His interest and work are unmistakably transnational and translocal, as are that of Wu Micha and Huang Junjie, even though Wu's transnational project is aimed at delinking Taiwan from mainland China. Chen has also been instrumental in organizing a network of scholars across East Asia interested in pursuing research in a transnational or regional issues that uncover commonalities and interrelationships through the study of social and cultural transformation in

multiple settings.[27]

Hong Kong itself is a global city. Yet insofar as the study of global history is concerned, historians in Hong Kong lag behind their counterparts in Taiwan and mainland China. They are also behind their colleagues in sociology and other social science and humanities disciplines.[28] At the Chinese University of Hong Kong, there is a Center for Comparative and Public History. Judging from its mission statement, it does promote global history, though it has potential to do so. But at the University of Hong Kong, Wang Gung-wu long ago established his reputation as a first-rate global historian on the Chinese diaspora in Southeast Asia. Students at the University can also pursue Global Studies at the undergraduate level, though no graduate program on global studies or global history is currently offered. Although Wang left for Singapore years ago, Ian Holliday, a political scientist, has established a global studies graduate program at the University.[29] That there are Western scholars who are teaching in Hong Kong universities (Holliday has been there for about two decades) attests to the earlier observation that Hong Kong's academic circle has long been globalized.

*The Hong Kong People's History of Hong Kong, 1841-1945* by Cai Rongfang (Tsai Jung-fang) is an interesting example, for Cai is originally from Taiwan and recently retired from the College of Charleston in the US where he taught for over thirty years after receiving his Ph.D. at UCLA. Published in 2001, the book is not a

global history per se. But it does attempt to overcome the limits of (Chinese) nationalist historiography on the one hand and colonial historiography by English scholars on the other. It proposes a "Hong Kong-centered history" (*Xianggang benwei shixue*). It presents the history of Hong Kong by focusing on how Hong Kongers reacted to various forces and influences from not only the mainland but also other parts of the world. In a word, it situates Hong Kong's historical development in a transnational and translocal context.[30] Cai is not alone in making such an effort. Instead, this has been an interest pursued by many in Hong Kong. *A New Hong Kong History* edited by Wang Gung-wu in two volumes is a case in point. It presents the work of many Hong Kong historians who examine Hong Kong's history from a transnational perspective.[31]

At the same time, especially after 1997, historians in Hong Kong have strengthened the study of China and Chinese history. At Chinese University of Hong Kong, known for being a center for China studies in Hong Kong, the history curriculum is comprised of several tracks with courses on "China," "the World," "Hong Kong," "Public," "Comparative," etc. Of these categories, "China" has the most courses. In addition, many courses under the "Public" category deal with Chinese history.[32] At the University of Hong Kong, known for its high quality English education, a six-credit course entitled "Foundations of Modern China" is offered at the introductory level and in the first semester in its history program,



followed by the “Introduction to European History and Civilization,” also a six-credit course, in the second semester.[33] Meanwhile, in both universities, which are flagship institutions of higher education in Hong Kong, the number of courses on Hong Kong history and culture is also on the rise. This indicates a complex picture of history education in Hong Kong, where localization and nationalization are juxtaposed, even though the latter has apparently gained traction in recent years.

In sum, globalization has produced divergent reactions in regions under the rubric of “Greater China.” Scholars in mainland China, Taiwan and Hong Kong have appropriated the meaning of globalization and gauged its impact from their own localized concerns and interests. As Bruce Mazlish observes, “Globalization, a process, takes on concrete historical features, rather than floating as a vague abstraction high above actual, even everyday life.”[34] China’s rise in recent years, coinciding with the wave of globalization everywhere, has led Chinese scholars to view its influence positively, reflecting their hope to continue riding the tide to propel it to world power status. Consequently, though not unaware of globalization’s challenge to nation-states, the Chinese have downplayed this aspect even though China’s economic success has been powered by and, at the same time, fueled a sense of nationalism among its populace. By comparison, scholars in Taiwan and Hong Kong have

taken different and sometimes more critical views of globalization.[35] Scholars in Taiwan see globalization both as opportunity and challenge. On the one hand it helps the island to renew and strengthen its ties with the world beyond mainland China, promoting an East Asian perspective on interpreting Taiwan’s historical development and foregrounding its diverse cultural traditions. On the other hand, globalization has also brought Taiwan closer to the mainland economically, which has undercut attempts to separate from China. The recent change in Taiwan’s government, marked by the defeat of the separatist Democratic Progressive Party and victory by the GMD, serves as an indication.

Of the three regions, Hong Kong is clearly the most globalized with respect to its connection with regional and global economic and financial activities. Yet after its return to Chinese rule, Hong Kong’s position has become the most complex and ambiguous. On the one hand, it serves as an important outpost for mainland China for its robust engagement with globalization. On the other hand, being under Chinese rule, it has to deal with new issues in managing its relationship with the mainland, namely how to become renationalized while maintaining its unique economic position and cultural identity.

In this article, we have shown the existence of divergent historical temporalities within the communities of “Greater China”. Globalization has generated new dialogues among them

and at the same time highlighted their differences.

Q. Edward Wang, (Rowan University; Peking University) can be contacted at [Wangq@rowan.edu](mailto:Wangq@rowan.edu)

He wrote this article for *The Asia-Pacific Journal*. Posted on February 17, 2009.

Recommended citation: Q. Edward Wang, "Globalization, Global History and Local Identity in 'Greater China'" *The Asia-Pacific Journal*, Vol. 8-1-09, February 17, 2009.

[1] The author wishes to express his appreciation of the help provided by Prof. Ku Wei-ying and his assistant Tsai Lan-ting at National Taiwan University in finding information on the impact of globalization in contemporary Taiwan. An earlier version of this article was presented at "Global History and East Asia" at Duke University on January 5-6, 2009. The author would like to thank the conference organizer, Dominic Sachsenmaier, for his invitation and its participants, especially Mark Selden, for their constructive criticisms.

[2] Tu Wei-ming, *Wenhua Zhongguo yu rujia chuantong* (Cultural China and Confucian tradition) (Singapore: National Singapore University Press, 1996).

[3] Alvin Toffler's works such as *Third Wave* and *Future Shock* were translated into Chinese and enjoyed a warm reception.

[4] Liu Bo, "Shilun quanqiu hua de lishi biranxing" (An exploratory discussion of the

historical necessity of globalization), *Helongjiang dianda xuekan* (Journal of Helongjiang TV University), 2 (2003).

[5] Xu Yanling & Gong Peihe, "Zai quanqiu hua de shiyu zhong jiedu Zhongguo tese shehui zhuyi," *Kexue shehui zhuyi* (Scientific socialism), 5 (2008).

[6] Yu Sinian, "Miandui quanqiu hua de Zhongguo xiandaihua" (China's modernization in the face of globalization), *Kexue shehui zhuyi* (Scientific socialism), 5 (2008).

[7] Sun Chaoyang, "Shilun quanqiu hua dui qingshaonian guojia minzu yishi de xiaoji yingxiang" (A tentative study of the negative influence of globalization in youth), *Gansu lianhe daxue xuebao* (Journal of Gansu allied university), 5 (2008).

[8] Zhao Lu, "Shixi wenhua quanqiu hua yu minzu wenhua zhenghe" (A preliminary analysis of cultural globalization and the reconstruction of national culture), *Heilongjiang jiaoyu xueyuan xuebao* (Journal of educational college in Heilongjiang), 10 (2008); Zhang Yong, "Lishi shiye zhongde quanqiu hua yu minzu-guojia" (Globalization and nation-states: a historical perspective), *Shijie minzu* (World nationalities), 2 (2007).

[9] Liu Ting, "Quanqiu hua beijingxia xifang qiangshi wenhua de xingcheng" (The establishment of Western cultural superiority against the background of globalization), *Lilun qianyan* (Theoretical forefront), 21 (2004); Wu Xiaoqun, "Women zhende xuyao quanqiu shiguan ma?" (Do we really need a global view of history?), *Xueshu yanjiu* (Academic research), 1 (2005); Li Cunxiu, "Lun quanqiu hua beijingxia xifangde wenhua zhimin zhuyi" (On Western cultural colonialism against the background of globalization), *Xueshu jiaoliu* (Academic exchange), 6 (2002); Zhao Yingchen, "Quanqiu hua beijing xiade Zhongguo wenhua anquan" (The security of Chinese culture against the background of globalization),

*Lanzhou xuekan* (Journal of Lanzhou), 6 (2004).

[10] Luo Tianhong, "Quanqiuhua shi xifanghua ma?" (Is globalization Westernization?), *Jiaoxue yu yanjiu* (Teaching and research), 4 (2000). The author's answer is negative.

[11] Chen Qingzhu, "Qianqiuhua shidai wenhua shenfen de jiangou" (The construction of cultural identity in the age of globalization), *Lilun daokan* (Theoretical guidance), 11 (2008).

[12] Liao, with a degree in comparative literature from Berkeley, is now professor of English at Tsing-hua University in Xinzhu whereas Yang, with a degree in history from Taiwan University, is a writer.

[13] Liao Binghui, "Bentuhua yu quanqiuhua de tiaozhan" (Localization and the challenge of globalization), *Xinshiji zhiku luntan* (Think-tank forum of the new century), 22 (2003).

[14] Yang Du, "Quanqiuhua yu Taiwan" (Globalization and Taiwan), *Shijie huawen wenxue luntan* (Literary forum of the Chinese speaking world), 1 (2004).

[15] Lu Jianrong, *Taiwan houzhimin minzu rentong, 1950-2000* (Postcolonial national identity in Taiwan) (Taipei: Maitian, 2003). Its introduction offers a good discussion on how "de-sinicization" becomes a precondition for many Taiwanese intellectuals intent on promoting Taiwan identity.

[16] See Li Xiyuan, "Quanqiu xing, minzuxing yu bentuxing: Xiang Gang xueshu jie de houzhimin piping he Xianggang ren wenhua rentong de zaijiangou" (Globality, nationality and locality: postcolonial critique in Hong Kong and the reconstruction of Hong Kongers' cultural identity), *Shehui xue yanjiu* (Studies in sociology), 4 (2005). Also, Luo Yongsheng, ed., *Sheide chengshi? Zhanhou Xianggang de gongmin wenhua yu zhengzhi lunshu* (Whose city? Civic culture and political discourses in postwar Hong Kong) (Hong Kong: Oxford

University Press, 1997) and Chen Qingqiao, ed., *Wenhua xiangxiang yu yishi xingtai: Dangdai Xianggang wenhua zhengzhi lunping* (Cultural imaginary and ideology: contemporary Hong Kong culture and political review) (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1997).

[17] Ibid.

[18] Chen Shan & Liu Dishan, "Shiji jiyu: quanqiuhua dianying geju zhongde xin Xiang Gang dianying" (The encounter of the century: new Hong Kong movies in the globalizing environment of movie production), *Yishu pingping* (Arts criticism), 7 (2007); Hu Ke & Liu Hui, "Quanqiuhua, Xiang Gang xing, da Zhonghua: Xiang Gang dianying shinian huiwang" (Globalization, Hong Kong, and greater China: Hong Kong movies over the past decade), *Dianying yishu* (Movie art), 4 (2007).

[19] See, for example, Yu Pei, ed., *Quanqiuhua yu qianqiu shi* (Globalization and global history) (Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe, 2007). Yu was then the director, and is now a fellow, of the Research Institute of World History.

[20] Luo Rongqu, "'Xiandaihua' de lishi dingwei yu dui xiandai shijie fazhan de zairenshi" (The position of 'modernization' in history and a new understanding of the development of the modern world), *Lishi yanjiu* (Historical research), 3 (1994); Li Shikun, "Lun shijie lishi lilun yu quanqiuhua" (On world history theory and globalization), *Beijing daxue xuebao* (Journal of Beijing University), 2 (2001); Ding Zhigang, "Guanyu quanqiuhua de sikao" (Thoughts on globalization), *Shijie jingji yu zhengzhi* (World economics and politics), 11 (1999); Yang Heping, "Quanqiuhua, xiandaihua yu shijie lishi de zhongheng fazhan" (Modernization, globalization and the linear and horizontal development of world history), *Xihua shifan daxue xuebao* (Journal of Xihua Normal University), 3 (2008).

- [21] See, for example, Wang Yongtao, “Jingji quanqiu hua shijiao xiade Zhongguo lishi” (Chinese history from the perspective of economic globalization), *Lilunjie* (Theoretical circle), 6 (2003); Yu Sinian, “Miandui quanqiu hua de Zhongguo xiandaihua” (China’s modernization in the face of globalization), *Kexue shehui zhuyi* (Scientific socialism), 5 (2008).
- [22] See Wang Qingjia, *Taiwan shixue 50 nian: chuancheng, fangfa, quxiang* (Writing history in Taiwan: tradition and transformation, 1950-2000) (Taipei: Maitian, 2002), 84-107, 139-183.
- [23] John Makeham & A-chin Hsiau, eds., *Cultural, Ethnic, and Political Nationalism in Contemporary Taiwan: Bentuhua* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).
- [24] Wakabayashi Masahiro and Wu Micha, eds., *Taiwan chongceng jindaihua lunwenji* (Taipei: Bozhongzhe wenhua youxian gongsi, 2000) and *Kuajie de Taiwanshi yanjiu: yu Dongya shi de jiaocuo* (Taipei: Bozhongzhe wenhua youxian gongsi, 2004). Wu’s words are in the latter, vi-ix.
- [25] Huang Junjie, ed., *Dongya ruxue yanjiu de huigu yu zhanwang* (Taipei: Taiwan University Press, 2005); idem, *Dongya ruxue: jingdian yu quanshi de bianzheng* (Taipei: Taiwan University Press, 2007).
- [26] See, for example, Chen Kuan-hsing (Guangxing), “The Imperialist Eye: The Cultural Imaginary of a Subempire and a Nation-State,” *Positions: East Asia Cultures Critique*, 8:1 (Spring 2000).
- [27] Chen Kuan-hsing (Guangxing), “Positioning Positions: A New Internationalist Localism in Cultural Studies,” *Positions: East Asia Cultures Critique*, 2:3 (Winter 1994).
- [28] Alvin So, a sociologist, has been noted scholars in examining the global connection between East Asia and the world beyond. See, for example, Alvin So & Stephen Chiu, *East Asia and the World Economy* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1995).
- [29] Ian Holliday’s presentation at Global Studies Consortium in Sophia University, Japan, in May 17-18, 2008, <http://globalstudiesconsortium.org/tokyo-2008>.
- [30] Cai Rongfang, *Xianggangren zhi Xianggangshi, 1841-1945* (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 2001).
- [31] Wang Gung-wu, ed., *Xianggangshi xinbian* (Hong Kong: Sanlian shudian, 1997), 2 vols.
- [32] [The Chinese University of Hong Kong](#).
- [33] [University of Hong Kong, Department of History](#).
- [34] “The New Global History” by Bruce Mazlish, 6.
- [35] See, for example, Chen Guangxing & Qian Yongxiang, “Quanqiu hua zhixia Taiwan de xueshu shuxie” (Academic writings in Taiwan under globalization), *Dushu* (Reading), 2 (2005). The authors argue that in view of the recent development in Taiwan’s academic circle, it seems that globalization actually means “Americanization” in that what has been established in the US are also being taken as standard by Taiwan scholars, such as ranking and evaluating publications by measuring how many times they are referenced by other scholars and indexed and abstracted by certain databases. Though they published this article in a mainland journal, such critique has not been seen in the works of mainland scholars, even though the same move too has occurred in the PRC.