The Egyptian Within: A Roman Figuration of Civil War

MICHELE LOWRIE
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The trope I will call “the Egyptian within” grafts ancient prejudicial stereotypes onto “the enemy within,” a conventional figuration of civil war. This hybrid arose in the context of Egypt’s role in the Roman civil wars of the first century BCE, once Caesar pursued Pompey to Egypt after Pharsalus in 48 and his heir Octavian pursued Antony and Cleopatra there after Actium in 31. Cicero had vituperated his Roman opponents during the turbulent last twenty years of his life as uncivilized barbarians or accursed monsters lacking “humanitas”. But it is the Augustan poets who developed “the Egyptian within” as a trope by transferring Cicero’s language onto Cleopatra, whom they foreground as the enemy. Although the eclipse of Antony’s representation masks the civil war as foreign and lends a patina of justification to an otherwise horrific bloodbath, the poets create a complex trope for the abject deeply buried within the self.

This orientalism has a different aim from the self-justificatory degradation of Easterners in the West analyzed by Said. It projects onto a notional other division within the self and reveals more about internal conflict than about Roman attitudes toward others. It both occludes and represents civil war and thereby offers a strategy for coping with its social and political devastation. Like all figurations, it cannot be contained – it became available for imperialist appropriation and was directed outward. Just as empire and civil war are inextricably linked at Rome as elsewhere, this figuration returns in the tradition to re-inscribe the discord that undergirds expansion. Comparative material from Balzac and Houellebecq shows that this figuration continues to resonate to this day.

Imperial epistemics, imperial practice: Roman knowings of objects of rule

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In contrast to the foundational role it played in Greek ethnography, alterity along the axis east–west played a vanishingly small role in classical Roman thought. The point can only be established ex negativo: Roman enmity with the Gauls was understood as existential and appears to have been encoded in literature and law over hundreds of years. Neither easterners
in general nor any given eastern power achieves iconic status as enemy of, or other to Rome in anything like the same way. (Egypt and Asia may serve as case studies in this regard.) This is not to say that Romans did not observe and reflect upon points of cultural difference, but these emerge to salience as challenges to government. Hence, the principal concern of Roman knowings of others is the heterogeneity of the objects of their rule, and these appear as lists or even as a class as aggregates of empirically observable phenomena. The result is a vantage point of observation characterized by distinctive epistemic and metaphysical humility. This attitude is apparent in two languages of legislation: the first addresses cultures and peoples distributed across the landscape in strictly non-hierarchical terms; the second figures objects of rule in purely bilateral relationships with the metropole.

La philosophie idéaliste et la religion romaine au début du XIXe s.

JOHN SCHEID
COLLEGE DE FRANCE

Les cultes orientaux et l'idée que les religions de Rome ont été changées par eux ont constitué pour plus d'un siècle l'un des dogmes de l'historiographie romaine. Il a été formulé en détail par un ouvrage de Franz Cumont, qui publiait en 1905 les conférences qu'il avait faites un an plus tôt au Collège de France. Même si de nos jours on ne croit plus guère à ces théories, le cliché continue de fleurir chez les historiens et philologues non spécialistes de l'histoire religieuse.

Dans ma communication je veux d'abord mettre en lumière comment cette théorie s'est progressivement constituée à la fin du XVIIIe siècle et au début du XIXe. dans la pensée des philosophes allemands. Leurs idées ont conflué dans les œuvres et les leçons de Hegel, par lequel la théorie a été transmise aux historiens contemporains. Elle comporte deux éléments centraux : la décadence présumée de la religion romaine, en dépit d'une profonde ferveur religieuse, et d'autre part le remplissage de ce vide religieux par les cultes orientaux qui offraient enfin aux individus la dimension métaphysique à laquelle ils aspiraient.

Après avoir démontré le caractère artificiel de cette construction, j’examinerai un deuxième aspect de celle-ci. Partant des travaux de Herder sur le Volksgeist, Hegel a pu attribuer à chaque peuple un « esprit » qui possédait des caractéristiques uniques, et un destin. À l’aide de ces éléments, la construction d’une dynamique du progrès devint possible. Hegel reconstruisit ce progrès qui mena de la religion en Orient, passionnée mais confinée dans des particularismes et l’absence de liberté, à la religion grecque, qui a récupéré cette ferveur avec la subjectivité libre de l’esprit grec, et l’a rationalisée et transformée en œuvre d’art, avant de la transmettre aux Romains, un peuple très pieux mais possédant une religion vide et essoufflée. De cette manière les cultes orientaux envahirent Rome et l’esprit des Romains et préparaient la voie vers l’avènement du culte oriental le plus important, le christianisme.

On a l’impression qu’en reconnaissant et en définissant l’identité et l’altérité de tous les peuples du monde ancien, Hegel et ses contemporains jugeaient en fait les identités religieuses à l’aune d’une catégorie considérée comme universelle, la religiosité. Or cette catégorie, qui provenait de l’œuvre du théologien philosophe Friedrich Schleiermacher, définissait l’inclination religieuse naturelle de tous les hommes comme n’étant « ni un savoir, ni un faire, mais un état déterminé du sentiment ou de la conscience immédiate de soi-même ». Cet arrière-plan théologique protestant qui explique l’inimitié et le mépris pour le ritualisme et l’institution religieuse, fut adopté par tous les savants occidentaux. Le prétendu progrès représente en fait une nouvelle
colonisation du monde et une imposition aux autres d’un concept chrétien considéré comme allant de soi en Occident. Aujourd’hui cette approche revient par un autre biais, avec l’accent qui est soudain mis sur la religion individuelle, qui est jugée comme la seule religiosité que recherchaient les anciens Romains, par opposition à la religion d’État, décrétée un simple discours de l’aristocratie, bref comme une pratique creuse.

Iran and Turan: Reimagining Central and East Asia in Late Antiquity

RICHARD PAYNE
UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

During late antiquity, circa 200-800 CE, the civilizations of Eurasia encountered one another with ever-increasing frequency and intimacy. At the nexus of Eurasian political, economic, and cultural networks stood the Iranian Empire (226-636 CE), the emergence and endurance of which depended on the trans-continental flow of commodities and on inter-imperial interaction. From the outset of their rule, the ruling house of the Sasanians represented itself almost exclusively vis-à-vis other empires, whether on third century rock reliefs displaying their subjugation of the Roman emperors and their – putative – conquest of India or in fifth through early seventh century literary accounts of their wars against Central Asian nomads and contacts with Chinese, South Asian, and Roman courts. This tendency toward locating political legitimacy in the capacity to manage relations with distant powers continued throughout the history of the empire, and the paper will discuss how the representations of the Iranian court evolved in relation to its political history, particularly after the rise of nomadic states in Central Asia in the late fourth century that compelled Iran to reckon with the states and societies of the Eurasian steppe and East Asia.

The idea of Iran the Sasanians invented contained models for representing interstate relations that were well adapted to the political circumstances of the era. Drawn from the Avesta, the Zoroastrian corpus of orally recited religious knowledge, the name of the empire, Ērānshahr, referred to the mythical territory in which the first kings of the earth and the patrons of Zoroaster ruled. It designated an ethno-class of the ērān, “the Iranians,” who possessed a complex of territories, šahr. It inaugurated a cosmological politics in which political action and decision-making was legitimated and represented in mythical terms, as a continuation of the cosmologically beneficial works of the mythical primordial kings who had initially institutionalized the Zoroastrian religion. Crucial to their claim to have succeeded the Zoroastrian mythical kings was the Sasanians’ reestablishment of universal sovereignty. In collecting tribute from the Romans, the Iranian court demonstrated the subordinate status of their primary imperial rival, and the primary function of the various media the court produced was to communicate the effective subjugation of Rome. But if early Sasanian media were obsessed with Rome, the focus of the court shifted northeastward toward the states and societies of the Silk Road in the fifth and sixth centuries.

The Hun conquest of key provinces along Iran’s Central Asian frontiers, especially Bactria, irreparably undermined the cosmo-political concept of Ērānshahr. From the late fourth century onward, the Iranian court not only yielded a significant portion of its territory to Hun and Turk states, but also continually confronted the superior military capacities of these nomadic imperialists. What is more, they compromised Iranian control over, and access to, the trans-Eurasian traffic in silk and silver that was indispensable to the functioning of the Iranian
political economy. To this unprecedented challenge to its political order, the court responded both ideologically and practically. On the one hand, the court undertook novel diplomatic ventures with its civilizational partners and restructured its military to contain the new nomadic enemies on its frontiers. The results included massive infrastructural project that rivaled the Great Wall of the Han Dynasty in scale and regular diplomatic contacts with Chinese states, the first substantive, direct political engagement between East Asia and the Near East. On the other hand, the court returned to its primary ideological source: the Avesta. The mythical accounts of the Zoroastrian kingdoms that prefigured Ėrānšahr included legends of a multi-millennial confrontation with pastoralist enemies in Central Asia, known as the Turanians, over whom the Iranians would eventually emerge victorious. These myths also included a model of a multipolar political order, in which polities sharing features of “civilization”– cities, agrarian economic base, and sophisticated courtly cultures – could legitimately wield power alongside the Iranians. In the process, the idea of Iran was reframed in binary terms – Iran versus Turan – while at the same time East Asia was reimagined as a potential political partner of Iran in a reconfiguration of global political order in multipolar terms.

Panel II
Language & Literature
December 4, 1:30 pm

Two Japanese Novelists: Sōseki and Tōson

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The title of this presentation is stolen from a 1969 book by Edwin McClellan (1925-2009), based in large measure on the doctoral dissertation he submitted to the University of Chicago Committee on Social Thought in 1957. McClellan takes up the work of two giants of modern Japanese literature, Natsume Sōseki (1867-1916) and Shimazaki Tōson (1872-1943). 100 years ago, Tōson was living in France in self-imposed exile designed to avoid an ugly scandal back home in Japan. During this period, Tōson published a number of essays and stories revolving around the figure of the étranger: the foreigner that he suddenly discovered himself to be. This process of representing the self as seen from the perspective of the other led to a subjective awakening that would guide the remainder of Tōson’s career: in France, he discovered the problem of Japan. A little more than a decade earlier, Sōseki spent two years in London—during which he came to the realization that the very notion of ‘literature,’ his supposed professional specialization, was an opaque other to him. This in turn launched him into a quest to reach some sort of understanding of what literature was, including his massive Theory of Literature (Bungakuron, 1907). To wit, in 1900-2 London, Sōseki confronted the problem of literature-as-other; in 1913-15 France, Tōson confronted the problem of Japan-as-other. Then, half a century later, McClellan confronted the problem of Japanese literature as other. This paper traces through this network of discoveries of the other and the modes of representation that were born out of them.
La découverte des langues de l’Asie Orientale:
The Japanese language through the crucible of Latin grammar

JEAN-NOËL ROBERT
COLLÈGE DE FRANCE

I will attempt here to draw some conclusions from three previous papers I wrote about the evolution of the knowledge of the Japanese language and the (pseudo-)linguistic reflections it brought about from the times of João Rodrigues (c.1561-1633) until the end of the nineteenth century. The three landmarks were first the grammar published by Diego Collado (? - 1638), a Dominican monk, *Ars grammaticae japonicae linguae* (Rome, 1632), then the *Arte de la lengua Japona* in Spanish (Mexico, 1738) by Melchor Oyanguren de Santa Ines (1688-1747), a Franciscan monk, and last the *Elementa linguae yaponicae classicae*, again in Latin (Liège, 1884), by G.H. Schils, a Belgian parish priest.

While Rodrigues seminal work remained an incomparable cornucopia for the knowledge of the Japanese language at the turn of the seventeenth century, a perusal of those three works shows that they are not aiming so much at a practical and positive mastery of the spoken or written language, as at a philosophical reflection on the nature or principle of language. To the difference of the grammars written in vernacular languages in the nineteenth century, the Latin grammar by Schils, probably the last one of its kind for the Japanese, has very little to do with the language itself. It can be demonstrated that the very use of Latin induced its author to free himself from the contingency of the real language to soar to a linguistic empyrean that would allow him to proceed with some daring hypotheses.

The Opium Connection

JAMES CHANDLER
UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

This talk deals with the First Opium War of 1840-42, both broadly reflecting on how the Opium War ramified in the divergent imaginations of East and West and taking as interrelated case studies a film and a novel. D. W. Griffith’s *Broken Blossoms* (1919), with its celebrated advancement of the sentimental system of film narration, derived its own melodramatic core sequences from Dickens’ *The Old Curiosity Shop* (1840-41). What considerations led Griffith to embed the insular London story elements he borrowed from *The Old Curiosity Shop* in a narrative that begins in Shanghai? And what, if anything, is to be made of the fact that Dickens’ novel dates precisely to the period of the First Opium War?
Au sens strict, la Question d'Orient envisage, du côté européen, la conduite à tenir vis-à-vis de l'empire ottoman jugé en état de décomposition avancé entre 1774 (traité de Kütchük Kaynardja) et 1920 (traité de Lausanne). Dans une acception plus large, par exemple chez E. Driault (La Question d'Orient, 8e édition, 1921), c'est dans l'Antiquité qu'on tente d'en fixer l'origine, particulièrement à partir de la conquête d'Alexandre, qui fut le premier à posséder « le pays compris entre la Méditerranée, la mer Noire et le Sahara à l'ouest, l'Indus à l'est, c'est-à-dire la route de l'Europe à l'Inde », et qui a constitué une véritable boussole pour les Européens : « Voici cinq siècles, depuis la bataille de Lépante, que les Européens reprennent vers l'Est les traces d'Alexandre le Grand, refoulent les peuples de l'Asie sur l'Asie, cherchent les routes des marchés incomparables de l'Inde et de la Chine, pour achever vers le Toit du Monde la communion de toutes les races humaines ». C'est dans le Moyen-âge occidental, dans le contexte des discours sur la Croisade, qu'il faut chercher les origines de l'insertion d'Alexandre en sa qualité de précédent et de modèle, sur les traces duquel les Princes sont invités à se lancer vers l'Orient, qu'il convient de « rendre » à l'Europe chrétienne. L'expansion européenne des XVIe-XVIIIe siècles n'a fait qu'accentuer le besoin d'un précédent de ce que, à l'exemple de Plutarque dans le De Fortuna Alexandri, on définit comme une mission civilisatrice (même si la formule apparaît plus tardivement). De cette conception européenne, on trouve une expression déjà achévé chez l'historien allemand J.-C. Gatterer (1729-1799). Comme tous ses contemporains en Allemagne, Gatterer est très hostile aux guerres et aux conquêtes sanglantes et illégitimes d'Alexandre ; néanmoins, il lui reconnaît un rôle historique exceptionnellement important au regard de l'histoire des rapports entre l'Europe et l'Orient : « Le siège de la domination est pour la première fois en Europe » (1767) ; — « Et de cette façon, grâce à Alexandre, qui s'empara en toute propriété des territoires qui appartenaient auparavant à la monarchie perse, la domination mondiale (Weltherrschaft) passa pour la première fois des Asiatiques entre les mains des Européens ». La contemporanéité de ces déclarations avec l'histoire de l'empire ottoman n'est pas pure coïncidence. Nous sommes à un moment où, particulièrement en Allemagne, les historiens reprennent et conceptualisent une démarche analogique apparue déjà dans la littérature byzantine : celle qui assimile purement et simplement l'état (supposé) de l'empire ottoman à la fin du XVIIe siècle et l'état (postulé) de l'empire perse au moment où Alexandre lance son offensive. Vers 1815, à l'issue d'une analyse de l'empire de Darius, le grand historien de Göttingen, Arnold Heeren, a cette formule : « Il existe aujourd'hui un empire qui se trouve dans une situation semblable ; peut-être ne faudrait-il pas même trois batailles pour nous faire voir, sur les bords de l'Hellespont, un spectacle pareil à celui qu'Alexandre montra à son siècle sur le Granique, à Issus, à Arbêles ». Son contemporain Barthold Niebuhr tient des propos comparables : « Alexandre nous apparaît comme un homme d'une importance extraordinaire, dans cette mesure qu'il donna une nouvelle apparence au monde entier. Il commença ce qui sera mené à bien en dépit de tous les obstacles, à savoir la domination de l'Europe sur l'Asie ; il fut le premier qui mena les Européens à la victoire en
Orient. L’Asie avait joué son rôle dans l’histoire, et elle était destinée à devenir l’esclave de l’Europe ».


“Oriental despotism” and the eighteenth-century law of nations

Jennifer Pitts
University of Chicago

During the latter half of the eighteenth century, Oriental despotism emerged as a key organizing category for the question of what sort of diplomatic and legal relations were possible between European and Asian states or empires. A consensus had emerged that the conceptual rubric that had structured earlier debates about such relations — the question whether it was permissible to make treaties with infidels — was no longer a meaningful one, because confessional difference was now understood to be irrelevant to interstate legal relations. The terrain of the debate shifted and came to be constructed on the conceptual ground of the category of Oriental despotism. As Oriental despotism came to replace infidel as a key analytic lens through which Europeans regarded legal and diplomatic relations with some of their major trading partners in the eighteenth century, the concept did important work to justify the idea that the law of nations was both uniquely European in fact and presumptively authoritative for the world as a whole.

As the law of nations increasingly came to be equated with European public law, the Ottoman Empire served as the defining marginal case of the European international order. This paper traces evolutions in diplomatic and theoretical texts to show how interactions between a diplomatic discourse that, although often disparaging of Ottoman practices, was also relatively flexible and pragmatic, and the starker and more uncompromising concept of Oriental despotism deployed in political debates, produced arguments for the legal exclusion of the Ottoman regime that seem to have exceeded the intentions of both diplomats such as the influential English envoy Paul Rycaut and the foremost theorist of the concept, Montesquieu. Alongside the growing importance of the category of despotism was a shifting understanding of the nature of diplomatic relations with states such as the Ottoman Empire and of legal instruments such as abdnames or capitulations; these came to be seen as anomalous and inferior in relation to reciprocal treaties among European states, and as evidence of the inferior capacity for sovereignty of the states that issued them. Montesquieu’s theory should be read in these legal and diplomatic contexts both because he drew heavily, if selectively, on the diplomatic literature and because, whether intentionally or not, his account of oriental despotism set the
subsequent terms of debate for diplomats and legal writers such as Sir James Porter, England’s ambassador to Constantinople from 1746-1762, and the French Orientalist Abraham Anquetil Duperron, the most thoroughgoing critic of the concept of Oriental despotism and its implications for international legal community.

European accounts of Oriental despotism tended to be at once anxious and triumphalist: the worry that Oriental despotisms represented a condition to which European monarchies might always succumb fed a desire to mark them as utterly alien and radically inferior to European regimes. The challenge posed by writers such as Anquetil to this way of thinking took the form of both legal argument and cultural critique. In contrast to a view of the law of nations as the exclusive prerogative of Europeans and a source of justification for their exercise of power over others, for Anquetil, Europeans were as likely to violate the law of nations as those they declared incapable of living up to its precepts, as well as inclined to use the apparent moral authority of the law of nations to vindicate self-interested actions, their own complacent self-conception, and their contempt for racialized others (Indians, Muslims, or simply “blacks”). While he concluded that the law of nations was a weak tool with which to confront state violence or the misdeeds of merchants and envoys, he sought at least to call attention to its misuse in the service of such violence or misdeeds and perhaps to repurpose it for more critical ends.

Once the states with whom Europeans had long had a variety of treaty and diplomatic relations came to be conceived as internally lawless, and as unwilling or unable to bind themselves by law to other states through bilateral treaties, and therefore as different in kind from European states, European discussions of the law of nations changed as well. Questions of admission into the community governed by the law of nations became paramount for nineteenth-century international lawyers in a way that would have been surprising to eighteenth-century legal writers; but the way for this new preoccupation was paved by the discourse of Oriental despotism.

**Orientalism and occidentalism: the question of comparisons and temporalities**

HENRY LAURENS
COLLÈGE DE FRANCE

The history of orientalism is well-known, whereas that of occidentalism is neglected.

I take here as my object of study Europe’s desire to acquire knowledge about Ottoman society and the latter’s willingness to learn about European societies.

Until the end of the 18th century, the major difference between the two worlds lay in writing practices. Ottoman writings were essentially restricted to the use of manuscripts, whose circulation was extremely limited as they were only read by a small elite. A few travel writings which were written for diplomatic purposes and read by very few people, there were no written texts about European societies. The Arab provincial chronicles barely spoke about European societies.

However, Eastern knowledge of Europe did exist, but it was a bottom-up process. There were thousands of European “renegades” in the Ottoman Empire, and they were usually welcomed because of their technical skills. They spoke in “lingua franca”, which means that information
was essentially disseminated orally, hence its absence from written production. The circles which received that information were indeed not those who produced written culture.

Apart from the renegades, knowledge of Europe also existed among certain Eastern Christians who knew the European languages and who moved from one world to the other. Most of them were Catholics. They left travel writings (relations de voyages), which, being handwritten, were not largely distributed.

Lastly, there were also the Levantines - in the strict sense of the Europeans who lived in the Ottoman empire, sometimes for generations - as well as the dragomans (interpreters) of the Sublime Porte. Originally, they were recruited among the renegades, but at the end of the 17th century they belonged to a group of Greek Orthodox families of Constantinople. It is certain that in the capital of the Empire, there was better knowledge of the European societies than in the provinces.

If occidentalism was thus until 1800 an essentially oral business, orientalism is primarily written production which can be divided into three great units.

The first phenomenon was the inclusion in Renaissance humanism of the study of the Arabic, Turkish and Persian languages. The opposition between the Ancients and the Moderns was superseded by a tripartite division between Ancients, Orientals, and Moderns. What the first generation of orientalists (though the word was only used from 1820 onwards) intended to do was to establish a universal literature followed by a universal history which would include the history of India and China. The first ambition was achieved with the translation of A Thousand and One Nights by Galland at the beginning of the 18th century, the second one led to the writing of The Spirit of the Laws by Montesquieu (1748) and Voltaire's Essay on Universal History, the Manners and Spirit of Nations (1756).

Travel writings make up the second group of orientalist written production. This literature sprang from - and sometimes merged with - pilgrimage narratives. There was a significant readership for this kind of literature, though it was only recognised as high literature after Chateaubriand. Those travel writings were written with this readership in mind, which is why they are very different from the writings of Muslim travelers. European travel writings told the traveler's adventures, but also the manners and customs of the local societies. There was always an implicit comparison between life “at home” and “over there”.

The third group is the work of dragomans and diplomats. Their production was mainly handwritten, and had bureaucratic and political purposes. It was mainly about the affairs of the time. However, the contents of those writings sometimes overlapped with the writings of the first two groups. This is best illustrated by someone like Jean-Michel de Venture de Paradis, who at the end of the 18th century translated classical Arab writings, wrote the first grammar of the Berber language, and advocated the conquest of Egypt all at the same time.

The East was almost an everyday reality in the printed world of the 18th century. The gazettes first referred to what was most remote, that is to say China, India, or Persia, and ended with what was geographically closest to Europe.

The practice of comparing societies became widespread during the 18th century. This comparison allowed Montesquieu to study societies by defining what was general and what was peculiar about them, using the notion of environmental determinism. However, comparisons were soon used to define a time scale. This was related to the notion of progress, which became prevalent in the second half of the 18th century. Europe's past and the present state of the East
became landmarks which were used to define progress. At the end of the 18th century, the East was thus defined as a past in the present, which led Europe to stand as the future of the East.

This process of evolution in time was defined as the process of civilization, which was supposed to allow those who were “late” to catch up and join the “civilized world”.

It was around 1800 that the Ottoman world started to use printed documents, first in the capital and then in the provinces. The first publications were technical and were meant to make up for what was lacking. Then, edited books appeared, which can be divided into two groups. The first type of books were dedicated to heritage and the other one to modernity and current affairs.

It was in this context that the first writings of Muslim travelers in European countries were published. At that point, they were intended for general readers as much as for the civil servants of the modern oriental state which was then developing. These writings were nothing less than treatises of European civilization.

The first writings of this kind recognised the Europeans' “technical” superiority, but asserted that Muslims kept a religious and ethical superiority. All that was needed was to acquire more neutral knowledge in order to catch up without one's own world being completely put into question.

In the 1850's however, such a position became untenable. The civilization process had to include a complete transformation of the principles ruling Islamic societies and lead to the latter's relative europeanization, as the rapid evolutions of material culture (furnishing, clothing) proved.

The comparison between the two worlds was no longer limited to their shared present, but also tackled Europe's past to reshape that of the East. Islamic reform movements tried to draw inspiration from the history of Europe, which was almost unknown to them, in order to change the present situation by going back to its roots just as Protestantism had. At the beginning of the twentieth century, others rather chose to turn to the most radical form of European modernism as a solution to solve the problems of the East. Auguste Comte and Herbert Spencer thus became the mentors of the Young Turks and Ottoman radicals.

This improved knowledge of Europe also enabled the Ottomans to reject the accusations it leveled against them. For example, Al-Afghani and Abdul dismissed the accusation of Muslim fanaticism, arguing that fanaticism was a significant dimension of European history, including the colonial practices of the time. While they were aware of the failings of their own societies, these authors praised Islam, which resulted in the paradox that the more traditional Islamic institutions disintegrated, the more they created a new Islamic utopia. However, the latter was in fact a way to oppose the Western world, as this discourse was not defined in relation to Islamic society but only in relation to Europe and the Western world, which had to be rejected.

During the same period, orientalist discourses were also varied. There was of course the discourse of superiority which included the civilizing dimension of the colonial project. But at the same time, the more one had to manage Islamic societies, the more one had to know about them. Administrative practices used the knowledge found in books about Muslim institutions, which could lead to a codification of Muslim law and customary law. The social state of Muslim societies was thus managed and to a certain extent transformed by the colonisers' ethnographical and anthropological science, which they derived from indigenous “informants”.
The orientalists' historical discourse contended that oriental societies had all been part of great civilizations in the past, which could be considered as a promise of revival in the future. The discourse of nationalists who opposed colonialism thus benefited from the orientalists' contribution, which they barely modified.

However, the apex of orientalism in the arts and literature of the 1820's and 1830's can also be considered as a protest against the advent of industrial society. Orientalism became a kind of anti-modernism which condemned the artificiality of society in the name of the past's authenticity which could still be found in the present of the East. This is the deep ambiguity lying at the heart of European colonialism: while boasting about being a modernising and civilizing mission, it actually bore antiquated notions of justice and loyalty in the absence of real democracy and equality. From Morocco under Lyautey's rule to India under Lord Curzon's, the Europeans of the beginning of the 20th century were involved in an orientalist and medeval frenzy in which indigenous people were trapped. The nationalists later claimed to be more modernizing than the colonisers because they had the real means to transform their societies. They understood that their real strength lay in their ability to express the future of their societies whereas the colonisers had locked themselves up in their past.

Panel IV
China: Conceptual and Other Frontiers
December 5, 10:00 am

Two Ming-Dynasty Thinkers of Historical Discontinuity, and Their Purposes:
Li Zhi and Matteo Ricci

HAUN SAUSSY
UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

The Jesuit missionary Matteo Ricci (1552-1610) is famous for his intensive study of Chinese literature, history and philosophy—part of a carefully devised strategy of acculturation as a result of which he hoped to convert China to Catholicism, working from the social élite downwards. In order to gain a foothold in conversations with literati men in China, Ricci had to master the Thirteen Classics. He not only became conversant with these works and their commentary traditions, but exploited double-entendres, silences or suggestions in the text to make them vehicles of a Christian message. To the objection that the ancient Chinese texts showed no trace of recording the Creation, the Fall, and other staples of Judeo-Christian sacred history, Ricci opposed the historical fact of widespread destructions of books under the First Emperor’s reign in the third century BCE. The missing references, he argued, surely could have been found there; and at any rate Chinese historical awareness could not be considered complete due to the bibliocaust, and ought to be supplemented by the histories of other peoples not subject to the First Emperor’s cultural purge.

In seizing on this event in Chinese history, Ricci was, as so often, capturing a theme much in the air in the late Ming dynasty. The venerable “genealogy of the way” or dao tong, carefully constructed over the centuries so as to establish the respectability of certain innovations in Chinese thought, no longer carried conviction. The essays of Li Zhi (1527-1602), an
acquaintance, even briefly envisioned as a potential ally, of Ricci’s also often evoke ruptures in the chain of transmission between the ancient sage-kings and later generations. But Li places the breaks differently and draws different conclusions from them. Both Ricci and Li, it could be said, take discontinuity as a call to reconnect with an even earlier stratum of antiquity, but what they see in that remoter past is quite different, corresponding to their distinct self-positionings.

**The shifting status of “Confucianism” in 17th- to 19th-century European representations and categorizations**

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As is all too well known, Confucius and some canonical texts associated to his teaching featured among the very first elements of Chinese culture that were brought to the knowledge of European elites by the Jesuit mediation starting from the 16th-17th centuries, during what can be considered as an early phase of modern globalization. In the Jesuit monumental publication dated 1687 entitled *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus*, Confucius was naturally presented as the “philosopher of the Chinese”, and so he appeared in the minds of all the 18th century Enlightenment thinkers of Europe, such as Voltaire ad Leibniz.

So how did it come about that just a few decades later, by the beginning of the 19th century, China found itself altogether excluded from the realm of philosophy which was declared to have originated in ancient Greece, that was supposed to be the very core of European cultural identity? This rejection of China out of the precincts of philosophy had a twofold consequence: first, the emergence in the early 19th century of a new academic discipline called Sinology, meant to accommodate a specific knowledge on China as an exotic object of study, or as “the Other” of Europe; second, the categorization of “Confucianism” as religion rather than philosophy, which was the achievement of another new European academic discipline called “science of religions” that emerged in the late 19th century.

This presentation will attempt to show how “Confucianism” was very much a European invention, and how it was shuffled around the intellectual geopolitics of enlightened, then industrialized and colonial Europe.

**Les visions du système administratif chinois en Europe aux 17e-19e siècles**

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This presentation deals with the changing image of China’s governmental institutions in the treatises on the Chinese empire that kept multiplying from the time of the first catholic missions in China in the late sixteenth century to the fall of the imperial system. It makes the point that, even though there is a rather clear contrast between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, on the one hand, and the nineteenth century, on the other—a contrast sometimes subsumed under the terms “sinophilía” and “sinophobia”—this contrast should not be exaggerated: there were significant gradations, and in fact glaring exceptions.

The Jesuit missionaries whose publications on China dominated the market in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europe were indisputably experts. Most of them spent years, even decades,
in China, some had an excellent knowledge of the Chinese language and of Chinese sources, those who belonged to the Peking mission and worked for the court as experts had a first-hand understanding of the workings of the central government and knew powerful people, and for their part the missionaries who stayed in the provinces (where their presence became illegal from 1724) had to be familiar with the ways of the local authorities, if only to protect themselves and their flock.

Such understanding and familiarity are apparent in the sections of the treatises on China devoted to the imperial state, its founding principles, its organization, and its personnel. Three major publications deserve particular mention. First is the *Histoire de l'expédition chrétienne au royaume de la Chine* published by Nicolas Trigault (1577-1628) in Latin in 1615 and in French the following year, which was based on the notes of Matteo Ricci (1552-1610), the founder of the Jesuit mission in China. The second work is the *Description de la Chine*, compiled by Jean-Baptiste Du Halde (1674-1743) using materials sent by his Jesuit colleagues based in China, some already published in the *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses* series. The “free” edition of the *Description* published in The Hague in 1735 exerted enormous influence in Enlightenment Europe and right through the nineteenth century. In contrast with the well-organized *Description*, the fifteen-volume *Mémoires concernant l'histoire, les sciences, les arts, les mœurs et les usages &c. des Chinois, par les missionnaires de Pékin*, published as a series from 1776 to 1791, can be described as a motley collection of notes, essays, and letters dealing with China’s government, society, customs, economy, arts and crafts, natural history, and more. Interestingly, much of its contents consist of answers to a questionnaire prepared by two typical Enlightenment statesmen, Henri Bertin (1720-1792) and Anne Robert Turgot (1727-1781), who had entrusted it to two Chinese converts trained in Paris as priests and sent back to China in 1765 to work with the mission. Though most of the texts in the *Mémoires* are by Jesuit missionaries, some of them were co-written with one or the other of the “Chinois de Turgot” and speak in the first person Chinese. Despite their occasionally “philosophic” preoccupation and tone, the *Mémoires* are heavy on Jesuit apologetics.

Indeed, all of the above-mentioned works were meant first of all as a defense of the Jesuit “accommodation” strategy inaugurated by Matteo Ricci, which implied a deep understanding of and sympathy for Chinese civilization as well as assiduously cultivating connections with the Chinese (and Manchu) elite. As a consequence, and because this strategy was fiercely attacked by other missionary orders and in the end was officially condemned by the church, it was incumbent on Jesuit authors to present the government and society of China in as favorable a light as possible. The “pro-Chinese” works that resulted (first among them Du Halde’s *Description*) were heavily resorted to by the *philosophes* who criticized the European monarchies by comparing them with an idealized China.

Not all *philosophes* agreed, however. Montesquieu’s criticism of Chinese despotism is well known, though it was more balanced than often said. Likewise, the influential *philosophe* Cornelius de Pauw’s *Recherches philosophiques sur les Égyptiens et les Chinois* (1773), which was an all-out debunking of things Chinese, spurred fierce rebuttals by the *Mémoires*’ Jesuit authors. But the Jesuits themselves were not unanimous. Quite strikingly, in 1688 was published a *Nouvelle relation de la Chine* by the Peking Jesuit Gabriel de Magalhães (1609-1677), which inserted in an otherwise routine description of the “marvels of China” the most damning condemnation of the Chinese officials’ immorality and systematic corruption. And we should not forget that in their private correspondence Jesuit missionaries were often delivering opinions quite different from those found in their published works.
After the disappearance of the Peking mission at the turn of the nineteenth century, books on China published in Europe, most of them displaying only a fragmentary knowledge of the field, acquired a decidedly different tone. The process was gradual, however. Works such as John Francis Davis’s sympathetic *The Chinese* (1836, and many reprints), Thomas Meadows’s well-informed *Random Notes on the Government and People of China* (1847), and Father Huc’s colorful *L’empire chinois* (1854), take the Chinese government seriously despite its problems, insist on the liberties enjoyed by the Chinese people under a benevolent autocracy that essentially leaves them alone, and strongly insist that China cannot be defined as a despotic system: fundamentally, they still believe in the future of its institutions and in their ability to reform themselves. They even suggest that some of them might usefully be emulated in Europe.

In contrast, many authors writing in the wake of the 1860 treaties, which marked the true beginnings of the European powers’ military, political, and economic dominion over China, consider that the Chinese political system is a spent one, and that if it is to survive and become a modern nation China will have to adopt, more or less wholesale, the beliefs and institutions of the West. This discourse, which likes to ridicule the Chinese political personnel for its incompetence, corruption, and absurd rituals, easily acquires colonialist and racist overtones. It tended to become the *doxa* in the West, but here again there are exceptions. The fascination with China as the Other did not die. Perhaps the most striking example is Eugène Simon’s *La cité chinoise* (1885). Though written by an author who spent nearly a decade in China during the 1860s, the book describes China as an ideal and prosperous agrarian democracy peopled by wise and cultured citizens. It is pure fiction under the guise of a well-informed testimony, much like the pro-Chinese literature published during the Maoist craze. Yet it was widely read and hotly discussed, and no less a European intellectual than Leon Tolstoy claimed that reading it made him want to visit China.

Where and how could a ‘good subject’ live?

Rethinking occupations and loyalties on three Qing frontiers, ca 1680-1850

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The Qing dynasty (1644-1912) roughly doubled the land area of the “Chinese empire” (itself at least partially an anachronistic concept), bringing under Beijing’s rule a number of territories that had either rarely or never been part of the realm. But when much of what is now Chinese Inner Asia was conquered (ca. 1683-1759), much of the Chinese elite saw them as no more than buffer zones, to be held on to (if at all) only to prevent them from being bases for threatening nomadic “others.”

In large part, this stemmed from the fact that most of the newly-acquired lands were ill-suited to sedentary agriculture, which was, for numerous reasons, considered the manual occupation most consistent with “civilized” behavior. Pastoralism was, by contrast, more or less the opposite of a “civilized” occupation; and since most Chinese were lactose-intolerant, it was not a promising option for migrants from China proper, anyway. Mining was a more plausible way of supporting large numbers of people in these new territories, and – as some people pointed out very soon after the conquest – offered the possibility of generating revenues to support the garrisons that secured these territories.
But miners were also considered highly suspect, as were loggers and other non-farmers. The reasons for this were many, but some worth emphasizing here are that:

(1) most miners were single males, and many earned too little to compete for wives in a society with an unbalanced sex ratio;

(2) miners tended to be highly mobile, partly because the low-tech, under-capitalized mines typical of the period rarely sustained production for very long. Moreover, miners were believed to be quick to turn to banditry when their legitimate incomes ran out;

(3) men without descendants, property, or fixed residence were generally considered to have little stake in the social order, making them objects of fear, contempt, and further marginalization;

(4) the tough male solidarity projected onto miners (whether it was real or not) often made them seem – like soldiers, sailors, miners, cowboys, pirates and other residents of early modern extractive frontiers worldwide—untamed and perhaps untamable.

(5) On a more mundane level, highly mobile people in thinly or indirectly governed spaces were rarely entered onto the population rolls, registered for the neighborhood watch system that the Qing counted on to maintain local order, and so on.

Given all these reasons to think that non-farmers were likely to be a source of instability, the Qing preferred to restrict immigration to their new holdings in the Northwest, even though that denied a possible outlet to poor people in increasingly crowded North China and –probably more importantly – meant that locally-raised revenues could not come close to meeting the costs of frontier defense. Many Han literati, citing these problems, argued in the 1760s and thereafter for abandoning this territory, or maintaining only a minimal presence there.

By the mid-19th century, however, these attitudes would change significantly. One part of the change – Han literati coming to see at least Inner Mongolia and Xinjiang as properly part of “Chinese” territory – has been traced in a number of studies. However, the necessary complement to that shift – coming to see it as a place in which “good subjects” could live civilized lives – has received almost no attention. To understand that, I would maintain, we have to look at what people were writing about highland settlers and non-agricultural livelihoods in two other parts of the country: (1) the far southwestern frontiers of Yunnan and Guizhou, where Han settlers interacted in complex ways with indigenous peoples (especially Miao) in the foothills of the Himalayas, and (2) the previously unpopulated mountains along the Hubei-Shaanxi-Sichuan provincial borders, which attracted numerous settlers after ca. 1750, and became the major strongholds of the White Lotus Rebellion (1796-1805) at the century’s end.

Both of these areas, unlike the northwestern frontiers, had long been considered part of the empire, though much of the southwest was ruled indirectly, through native chieftains (tusi), and much of the 3-province border area had barely been ruled at all; both of them were increasingly filling up with a mixture of miners and metal-workers; loggers, charcoal-makers, and paper-makers; gatherers of medicinal herbs and mushrooms; merchants; and people attempting various more and less ecologically precarious kinds of farming (often using cultivars recently transplanted from the Americas). In Yun-Gui, some late 17th - early 18th century provincial and local officials called for accepting, or even encouraging, poor immigrants from the interior provinces, and some saw mining in particular as a good occupation for these immigrants. These officials usually argued that the region’s indigenous people were incapable of managing mines,
and some claimed that since the miners would buy supplies that the indigenous people could produce, everyone would benefit.

The more common position, however – and the one that dominated policy, especially after ca. 1735 – was that poor migrants (often referred to as liumin, or “vagrants”) were far too disruptive: they either oppressed the indigenous population (e.g. by selling them things they didn’t need and trapping them in usurious debt), and/or fanned their discontents and led them in uprisings against their legitimate rulers. Paradoxically, the more that such migrants (who were overwhelmingly single males, and often married into Miao families) integrated themselves into indigenous society, the more suspect they were in official eyes: the children of inter-ethnic unions were considered particularly dangerous, as they would combine “the cunning of the Han with loyalty to the [people of] their mothers.” Men who did these things, who undertook non-agricultural occupations, or who farmed using Miao (swidden) techniques were “traitors” rather than “good subjects.” Beijing frequently ordered them to be sent back to wherever they had come from, though there is no indication that this had much effect. Even short of removing these men, the government enacted many rules meant to keep them apart from indigenous communities and to limit the impact of whatever contacts there were. (It was, for instance, almost impossible for a Han creditor to legally foreclose on a Miao debtor after 1740.) And when what we might now call “ethnic” conflicts did arise, the Qing generally sought to balance the interests of the different groups, often restraining the claims of immigrants. In short, while the Qing certainly saw Miao as “other,” and as inferior to most Han (aka liangmin or “good subjects”), they saw poor, unmarried, and non-agricultural Han as at least equally threatening to their efforts to pacify and (more intermittently) “civilize” the frontier.

But beginning in the early 19th century, we see a series of important shifts – many of which seem to have stemmed from the experience of suppressing the White Lotus Rebellion on our third frontier: the internal frontier of the 3-province highlands. These mountains had been very sparsely populated in the Ming and early Qing, harboring mostly smugglers, counterfeiters, and so on. A combination of rapid population growth and soaring resource demand (e.g. for timber) in the valleys below, plus the availability of new crops (especially maize and potatoes) suitable for high altitudes, led them to fill up rapidly in the late 18th century, without a comparable growth in the government’s presence; an assortment of lineage organizations, secret societies, and religious sects provided most da-to-day governance. When officials initiated a crackdown on the illegal White Lotus sect in the lowlands, they both provoked an uprising and sent many White Lotus members fleeing to join their fellows in the highlands. The regular army failed to suppress the rebels; when victory came, it relied heavily on raising local militia, from both valley and mountain communities.

In influential writings about highland pacification and post-war reconstruction, the official Yan Ruyi (1759-1826) emphasized that it was not possible to depopulated the highlands; the only hope was thus to fill them with “good subjects,” who would cooperate with an enlarged civil government. However, Yan continued, much of this territory would not support agriculture for long; maize in particular did not hold the soil well, and the resulting erosion created bare hillsides (and flooding in the valleys below) within a few years. On the other hand, he insisted, loggers, miners, etc., could be made into “good subjects” if they ceased to be mobile: and that could be accomplished through various measures that would make their occupations more stable and more remunerative, allowing them to “raise children and grandchildren.” Once such stopped moving in search of new mines to open or forests to clear, they could then be brought onto the population registers, enrolled in community compacts (in which they would take responsibility for their own and their neighbors’ behavior and welfare), and recruited into loyal militia; some
would even become educated and could become officials. Yan claimed to have already accomplished this in a number of communities in this area, insuring peace in the region as long as such efforts were sustained.

Whether or not they read Yan Ruyi, officials along the ethnic frontiers in Yunnan and Guizhou (which had seen several of their own, albeit smaller, uprisings between 1795 and 1813) were soon making similar claims. Particularly in the copper-mining areas of Yunnan (which provided much of the metallic base for Qing currency), early-mid 19th century gazetteers and some other texts reasserted old claims about the necessity of supporting immigrant miners, and the possibilities for them to coexist peacefully with indigenous people, while laying new emphasis on the benefits of non-agricultural production for uplifting poor immigrants and developing strong communities that would help pacify the surrounding area. (Some of these texts emphasized the importance for creating these communities of providing low interest working capital, so that enterprises could operate on an appropriate scale and workers could receive pay and supplies promptly; this was something that Qing had sometimes done for copper miners in the early and middle 18th century, but not for any other non-farmers, and not after about 1770.) Some officials responded to specific inquiries from Beijing about vagrants and banditry on the frontier by insisting that to the extent that banditry existed in their jurisdictions it stemmed from small, hard-core, groups of both Han and Miao desperadoes, having nothing to do with miners, loggers, etc. – that the militia of the latter were actually instrumental in fighting banditry. The noted official and amateur scientist Wu Qijun (1789-1847) -- who served briefly as governor-general of Yunnan and Guizhou (1844-45) and wrote at length about its plants and minerals -- went so far as to claim that miners, loggers, paper-makers, and so on were better human material out of which to make good frontier subjects than farmers were because: (1) their occupations could be practiced more sustainably than agriculture in this terrain, and (2) when properly capitalized, their enterprises supported large, concentrated, settlements, while the region’s low yields (and consequent need for many acres) led farmers to scatter, often staking isolated claims deep inside “barbarian” territory. It was thus much easier to implement community compacts, population registration, and militia among the non-farmers.

It is extremely difficult to evaluate how much of what these officials claimed was actually done, or how effective it was; but for whatever reason(s), both the Miao frontier and the 3-province highlands were generally peaceful from about 1815 to 1850. Meanwhile, in the Northwest, a more halting but still discernible shift in the same directions was evident. Restrictions on mining in Xinjiang were loosened, and the Qing began cautiously promoting increased settlement (albeit mostly of farmers) after 1831. Meanwhile, a widely read essay by Gong Zizhen (1792-1841) called for massively expanding settlement in Xinjiang, and abolishing indirect rule through indigenous elites. Gong assumed that most settlers would be impoverished vagrants from the North China plain, and predicted that the livelihoods awaiting them in Xinjiang would make them into “good subjects …able to raise children and grand-children.” While he imagined most immigrants farming (aided by large irrigation projects) he also envisioned other occupations: even livestock-raising, he thought, could create good subjects, as long as it was pursued via sedentary ranching rather than nomadism. The idea that emigrants from the agricultural heartland could be morally improved by moving to remote, Muslim-majority areas and becoming herdiers (even sedentary herdiers) represented a significant reversal of deeply entrenched ideas about what sorts of work were and were not good bases for civilization. The Qing were in no position to implement most of the proposals that Gong and others made for their various frontiers; for the next century, it would be all that they and their successors
could do not to lose huge chunks of territory. But these changing ideas about frontiers and frontier peoples were nonetheless important.

One reason -- which is only visible in the long-run and mostly lies outside the scope of this paper -- is that they laid the foundation for a further rethinking of frontiers and of non-agricultural occupations that would come after ca. 1890, in which the far west’s mineral wealth was re-imagined as essential to China’s political salvation and economic transformation, and migrants to the Northwest in particular as hardy souls who would help regenerate the “Chinese race.” Another, which became visible much more quickly, was that, as the Qing came to assess immigrants and their activities more positively, they became far more inclined to support them when they clashed with indigenous populations (especially, though not exclusively, with Muslims, in both the Northwest and Southwest). Moreover, that closer alignment between recent immigrants, their organizations (including militia), and officialdom had a self-catalyzing quality: the state’s increasing willingness to support these immigrant against locals alienated many older frontier communities, while making it all the more likely that migrants would cling to and strengthen identities as “people from the interior” (neidi ren, which one begins to see much more often as a self-descriptor by the 1840s) and later as “Han,” while becoming much less likely to seek integration into indigenous communities, as many had in the 18th century. (That more immigrants were arriving with wives, and thus could not inter-marry with locals, also fed this change – the paper will touch briefly on these sociological developments as well.)

Thus an ethnically fluid frontier became a more sharply divided one: this culminated in massive rebellions in the 1850s-1870s, followed by ethnic cleansing by Qing armies and allied militias, and a much more determined state effort to encourage Han immigration and institute direct rule afterwards. In a sense, then, the Qing had come by 1850 to treat proletarians, vagrants, and other migrants with non-normative occupations much less as unassimilable “others” and objects of suspicion: but the flip side of that greater inclusiveness was that both state and migrants became much more firmly committed to treating indigenous frontier populations as “others” to be pushed aside en route to social mobility, general economic progress, and the realization of peaceful, civilized political rule.