

■ The “Other” Asia: In Search of a Possible World of Asia

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Abstract

This present paper explores the problems concerning the conceptualization of Asia. To tackle this formidable problem, it undertakes a review of the well-known notion of “Asia as method,” investigating its development in relation to the condition of humanity upon which Asia is conceptualized during various historical phases. Further, the paper proposes a new concept of Asia to emphasize its thinking movement that constitutes a philosophical event through creating new concepts. To illustrate this new concept of Asia, the term “the Other Asia” is coined and the famous novel *Orphan of Asia* by the Taiwanese writer Wu Zhuoliu is also introduced and discussed. This paper argues that the act of problematizing Asia not only has the potential to bring forth a new and better understanding of Asia, but also signals a particular moment in time when a revival of philosophical power in Asia can actually become possible.

Keywords: Asia, Asia as method, the concept of Asia, thinking event, the Other Asia, *Orphan of Asia*

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Preface

The growing economic and military power of China has no doubt made Asia (or East Asia in the context of this present paper) a major issue in contemporary international politics, not to mention the nuclear weapons threat from North Korea and the increased conflicts occurring in the South China Sea. The growing tension in this region has forced the Obama Administration to announce a “pivot to Asia” foreign policy to address the issues in this region. This situation seems unavoidable and indeed an expected “outcome” of globalization.

The former Third World countries in Asia (except for Japan) are now modernized and eager to participate in shaping a new global order in the post-Cold War era. Their gradual rise inevitably will challenge the East-West hierarchical power structure that has sustained Western dominance for the last century. The complexity of the struggles now going on within Asia due to the historical development of countries there can only make this shift in the global power relationship more complicated, which is why current Asian affairs not only involve economic, military, and political concerns, but also invariably historical, cultural, racial, and even ideological measures.

Undeniably, there is growing interest in Asian affairs among not only Western, but also Asian, scholars. These interests are seen as responses to the growing power of Asia in the global arena, and researchers cannot ignore the tendency and strong desire, especially among Asian intellectuals, to reconsider Asia as not only a geographical place for recognition but also a site for knowledge production. This tendency should not, however, simply be recognized as Eastern resistance against the West based only on an oppositional framework of power relation and ideology. The request to reconsider Asia by Asian scholars implies a strong intent to re-position Asia in the new global order. It will inevitably challenge our thought habits as well as the hierarchical power structure that has underpinned the historical relationship between Asia and the West.

The request to reconsider Asia is of course not a new issue; instead, it has a long genealogy of historical and theoretical endeavors that highlight the issues of Asian modernity. Generally speaking, Asia is constantly understood in that framework, where Oriental modernity is recognized as a historical era in oppositional relationship to the West, as the Japanese Sinologist, Takeuchi Yoshimi, argued in the postwar years (53-54). This view has actually characterized the genealogy of many endeavors to conceptualize Asia and further prescribed its major issues, including its historical development, geographical imagination, cultural heritage, subjectivity, and resistance to the West, to name a few. Thus, one might wonder what it means to propose such rethinking of Asia, and how

can that proposal today be different from others during different phases of world history?

This paper argues that to reconsider Asia as a site for knowledge production does not simply mean to understand Asia from a new perspective or situate Asia within a new global power structure, but rather to problematize Asia as Asia. To problematize Asia suggests there is an endeavor to theorize Asia, treating the region as a set of problems rather than as an object of knowledge and thus raises both epidemiological and ontological concerns. For example, has Asia developed its own theoretical system independent of the West and fully capable of explaining its own reality? Or to put it another way, can Asian civilization ever be explained sufficiently by using only Western theories? Arguably, these questions tend to reaffirm the West's sole ownership of theory and assume the superiority of Western knowledge for explaining Asian reality. Further yet, these arguments lead to heated debates on the basic question of "Asia and theory."

Thus, how to problematize Asia is primary concern of this present paper. To tackle this formidable topic, this paper reviews the well-known notion of "Asia as method," investigating its development in relation to the condition of humanity upon which Asia has been conceptualized during its various historical phases. Further, the paper proposes a new concept of Asia to emphasize a thinking movement that becomes a new philosophical event by creating new concepts. This paper argues that the act of problematizing Asia not only has the potential to bring forth a new and better understanding of Asia, but also signals a particular moment in time when a revival of philosophical power in Asia can actually become possible.

To illustrate this new concept of Asia, the term "the Other Asia" is coined to indicate this new possibility for Asia, and the famous novel *Orphan of Asia* (亞細亞的孤兒) by the Taiwanese writer, Wu Zhuoliu (吳濁流), is introduced and discussed. The novel depicts the figure of an orphan that characterizes a colonial situation where the relationships between Asian countries are redefined, thereby leading to a new concept of Asia. It provides a narrative that portrays the orphan's journeys in various Asian areas and thus epitomizes Asia as a process of becoming an "Other" Asia. Therefore, the concept of the Other Asia can be best illustrated by the figure of the orphan.

In what follows, the discussion first focuses on the "Asia and theory" question, analyzing the "political economy" of the current condition of humanity in which the concept of Asia is embraced. It then undertakes a review of the notion of "Asian as method," exploring how Takeuchi conceptualized Asia in relation to Western modernity. Following the historical and theoretical development of that notion, this paper introduces the new concept of Asia to mark the act of

a thought-event to signal the revival of philosophical power in Asia. Finally, through the figure of the orphan as depicted by the novel, *Orphan of Asia*, this paper explains how the concept of the Other Asia can contribute to a rethinking of Asia in current situation.

Asia and Theory

The pairing of the two terms, Asia and theory, is perhaps, as Shih Shu-mei puts it, “oxymoronic” (467). Asia and theory are often considered unrelated, and theory is often designated as only “Euro-American,” if not limited to the French. Using examples of the movement of Western theories across Asia and their uses in Asia, Shih demonstrates that Asia is constantly perceived as more of a particular “geographical location” than “a set of concepts and ideas” (468). Or to put it another way, Asia is always treated as a “reality” that waits to be tested by Western theories. This phenomenon is especially apparent in the so-named area studies in American academics, so grounded in Cold War ideology for decades.

As Shih points out, the oxymoron between Asia and theory reveals the binary and oppositional relationship between the two concepts, or more precisely, the hierarchical power relationship that structures global cultural politics. More significantly, this conceptual framework of “Western theory vs. Asian reality” not only speaks of the mentality that lies beneath the modernization process of Asian countries like China and Japan. It also reflects the “political economy” dominated by the American empire since World War II had ended. This tendency can be easily found in the bulk of the discourse on Asian modernization and is also explicit in the academic research that seeks to incorporate Asia. For example, American character can be found in postcolonial theories that are based mostly on materials of past colonies, and not surprisingly, the Third World postcolonial intellectuals are still seeking out and implementing Western theories as their prestige and foremost cultural capital.¹

Shih’s observation and comments are not unusual. A similar concern is ex-

¹ Considering postcolonialism as a phenomenon of global capitalism, Arif Dirlik persuasively argues that the postcolonial begins “[w]hen Third World intellectuals have arrived in First World academic” (52). In a similar manner, Aijaz Ahmad observes the emergence of the postcolonial criticism and cautions that the Third World intellectuals who are based in metropolitan university “materially represent the undifferentiated “colonized Other” or “*postcolonial* Other” (94; italic original); accordingly, the East is reborn as a “Third World,” which seems to have become a “*career*” (94; italic original). In the actual situation, many Third World intellectuals have studied in the higher education in the West, especially in the US, and then return to their home countries to teach.

pressed by the Japanese American scholar, Sakai Naoki, who extends this line of thinking to a review of Asian humanity. In his recent article titled, "Theory and Asian humanity: On the question of *humanitas* and *anthropos*," Sakai, in a fashion similar to that of Shih, points out that the concept of "man" along with the idea of "humanity" belongs to the West and consequently should be modified as "Western" or "European." In contrast, Asia appears more as an anthropological concern. This aspect also explains why European civilization is associated with "humanity" studies, and Asia, in contrast, is categorized as area studies that are concerned with ethnicity. Apparently, a common theoretical framework or ideology lies behind this division of thinking, that is, Asia functions as "a derivative of Europe's self-referentiality" and is an "effect of [Europe's] exclusionist and discriminatory 'bordering' or border inscription" (446).

This particular perspective allows Sakai to explore the question of why such division of civilization remains effective and on what grounds theory continues to be designated as only European. According to Sakai, this phenomenon has to do with the development of the accepted concept of humanity in modern Europe. Sakai observes that the anxiety over the crisis of the European spirit that occurred during the first half of the twentieth century was accompanied by an essentialist insistence on the unity of the West, which had to rely on the *archê* of what originally constituted the West or Europe, on the one hand, and exclusion of the Rest on the other hand (457). As a result, Europe or the West is now never a simple name of a geographical place, as Asia appears to be, but rather a "spirit," a special mode of civilization that distinguishes itself from the Rest through the mechanism of exclusion.

By the juxtaposition of the two classical analogues, *humanitas* and *anthropos*, Sakai also speaks of knowledge production being closely related to global cultural politics. As Sakai remarks, *humanitas* implies a privilege of knowledge production that involves both transcendental and empirical, while *anthropos*, however, only participates in knowledge production at the empirical level. Sakai further identifies two different flows of academic information; namely, the centripetal and the centrifugal. The centripetal flows travel from peripheral sites to the Western European or North American centers; they are the factual data of the peripheries that are selected, recognized, and translated, in order to enter the "humanity" context. The centrifugal flows, in contrast, travel from the centers to the peripheries; they emphasize categorization, separation, and sometimes self-reflection. Sakai adds that the second mode of information flows as what we usually regard as "theory."

Asia As Method

With regard to the question of Asia and theory, the proposal of “Asia as method” raised by the Japanese Sinologist, Takeuchi, during the postwar Japan deserves the most attention. With the notion of “Asia as method,” Takeuchi reflected on both Japanese and Chinese modernity and called for a re-conceptualization of Asia as a means to overcome the so-called “modernity” rooted in Western history and Western civilization. According to Takeuchi, the term “Asia” no longer indicates any existence in a substantive form, such as a physically geographical area or a social and cultural unity; rather it implies a “method” that is associated with the construction or conceptualization of Asia.

In her article, “Theory, Asia, and the Sionphone,” Shih Shu-mei discusses Takeuchi’s proposal of “Asia as method” in the context of the current humanity condition, and sees it as an example for overcoming the binary opposition of Western theory vs. Asian reality. More significantly, for Shih, it indicates the possibility that Asia can be a “location” of theory production. It is also from this perspective that “Asia as method” can constitute a special form of resistance against the West that is proper to Asia. However, as Shih cautions, this proposal does not simply advocate the autonomy of Asia by claiming its independence from the West, nor does it aim at provoking a true dialectical negation of the West as master. Rather, it implies a process of Asia constituting itself wherein Asia has to be more involved in engagement with the West. Shih quotes Takeuchi’s words:

[. . .] the Orient must re-embrace the West, it must change the West itself in order to realize the latter’s outstanding cultural values on a greater scale. Such a rollback of culture or values would create universality. The Orient must change the West in order to further elevate those universal values that the West itself produced [. . .] When this rollback takes place, we must have our own cultural values. And yet perhaps these values do not already exist, in substantive form. Rather I suspect that they are possible as method, that is to say, as the process of the subject’s self-formation. This I have called ‘Asia as method,’ and yet it is impossible to definitely state what this might mean. (Takeuchi 165; qtd. Shih 472)

As Takeuchi argues, what “Asia as method” marks is those values that do not exist “in substantive form,” at least not yet and it is, therefore, better understood as a “process of [a] subject’s self-formation,” or “subjectivication.” Following Takeuchi, Shih emphasizes the agency and subjectivity of Asia, arguing that this agency and subjectivity makes Asia “a site of method,” that is, “the location of theory” (472). Further still, the process of subjectivication is also a process of criticality. In this regard, “Asia as method” is a projected “potentiality” that can be realized only when Asia has achieved a sort of “critical subjectivity” (472).

Takeuchi's proposal of "Asia as method" cannot be fully understood without taking into account his thinking on the Oriental modernity that came into being in both China and Japan. Takeuchi has made it clear that "Oriental modernity is the result of European coercion, or something derived from that result" (53). In other words, within the scope of modernity, the Orient cannot be separated from and independent of Europe. Rather, it has to be understood as part of a mutual relationship. In addition, Takeuchi stated that modernity indicated a specific "historical era" when Europe brought its civilization to the Orient while Europe was recognizing itself by distinguishing itself from the old (54). As a result, just as the modern cannot be separated from the pre-modern, the Orient has to be thought of in the same way in terms of its relationship to Europe.

This view then is the "historical" context wherein Takeuchi contemplated the "subject" of Asia, achieved through a special mode of existence recognized as "Oriental resistance" against the West. As a Sinologist, Takeuchi observed the sharp difference between Japanese and Chinese modernity. Japanese modernity, or the "honor student culture," as Takeuchi called it, tends to borrow concepts from the West and thus fails to develop its own through resolving the conflicts between concept and reality. Takeuchi writes:

When in Europe a concept become[s] discordant (i.e. contradictory) with reality (it always becomes contradictory), a movement occurs in which accord is sought by the overcoming of that contradiction, that is to say, by the development of place. Here it is the concept itself that develops. However, when in Japan a concept becomes discordant with reality (this is not movement, so not a contradiction), one abandons former principles and begins searching for others. Concepts are deserted and principles are abandoned. Writers abandon words and search for others. The more faithful these writers are to scholarship and literature, the more fervently they abandon the old and incorporate the new. (65)

Takeuchi lamented Japan's failure in developing its own concept due to its cultural character, and suggests that as a result, Japanese culture lacks a thinking habit like European culture. Without motivation and passion for seeking the "accord" between concepts and reality, Japanese modernity appears to be for Takeuchi a failure, although it may often seem successful in many respects.

In contrast to Japan, Takeuchi found in the Chinese culture a very different type of modernity, which is revealed through one of the most prominent modern Chinese writers, Lu Xun, and his work. In a parable by Lu Xun entitled, "The Wise Man, the Fool, and the Slave," Takeuchi discovered a specific mode of existence that he regarded as an "oriental resistance" that only belongs to the Chinese. According to Takeuchi, the slave who is the subject of the parable, presents a state of being awakened from dreaming, that is, a full awareness of

being a slave and having “no path to follow.” Unlike the wise man and the fool who both offer alternative solutions, the slave realizes the truth, namely that he is a slave when he rejects his status as slave and also rejects the fantasy of liberation. Takeuchi insists that “no path to follow” is precisely the state of the slave, and it constitutes a special mode of despair. This special mode of despair gains an active character in Lu Xun’s presentation. Resistance can emerge when despair is activated. Takeuchi argues that such a unique movement as resistance is the profound meaning of despair in Lu Xun and he then remarks that “it is what makes Lu Xun possible” (71).

Sakai also refers to Takeuchi’s proposal in his discussion of contemporary Asian humanity. In his review of Takeuchi’s thought, Sakai emphasizes Asia’s self-awareness through its own defeat. That is why Oriental modernity, for the most part, can be regarded as “colonial modernity” and the entire process of Asian modernization is inevitably also associated with “colonial humiliation.” Sakai writes that “Takeuchi observed that when Asia was defeated, invaded, penetrated, and subjugated, could she wake up in modernity” (442-43). Yet, what is even more significant in Sakai’s remark is the framework of the Europe-Asia relationship in which the problem of modernity is actually addressed.

As mentioned earlier, Shih Shu-mei stresses the agency and the subjectivity of Asia in Takeuchi’s proposal; however, it should also be noted that the “subject” of Asia in Takeuchi’s thought is neither single nor unified, but rather it is plural and fragmentary. In addition, the despair that functions as a special form of Oriental resistance is never based on a dialectical negation, but instead on an active affirmation that originates in the internal will rather than any external reference.

There is no doubt that “Asia as method,” with its great concern for Oriental modernity and Asian subjectivity suggests a rethinking of Asia that also implies a reconfiguration of world history. The proposal of “Asia as method” indeed continues to be widely discussed and appropriated in various historical contexts. As a result, the nature of this “method” has undergone transformation regarding the problems it is supposed to resolve. As previously discussed, “Asia as method” is taken by Shih and Sakai to be a perfect example that reveals the theoretical framework of the basic binary opposition between Asia and the West that underpins the “political economy” currently dominated by the West, and the possibility of breaking through that “political economy” to map a new configuration of global cultural politics.

In a similar fashion, Chen Kuan-hsing extends the use of “Asia as method” in his discussion on current global cultural politics and turns it into a practical strategy to de-colonize the Asian humanity condition so rooted in Cold War

mentality and dominated by American imperialism. With reference to "Asia as method," Chen proposes viable strategies that can transform current global humanities conditions. Chen writes,

Rather than being constantly anxious about the question of the West, we can actively acknowledge it as part of the formation of our subjectivity. In the form of fragmented pieces, the West has entered our history and become part of it, but not in a totalizing manner. The task of Asia as method is to multiply frames of reference in our subjectivity and worldview, so that our anxiety over the West can be diluted, and productive critical work can move forward. (223)

In fact, the idea of "trans-Asian" connections has become one of the major strategies that serve as the multiple frames of reference in Chen's proposal, and the very idea also demonstrates the plural nature of Asian modernity and Asian subjects that was only implicit in Takeuchi's idea. Like Takeuchi's proposal that sought a new idea of Asia half a century ago, Chen seeks a new Asian subjectivity through regional communication among Asian countries, with the hope of mapping a new configuration of global culture and civilization.²

The New Concept of Asia

As shown already, Asia provides the ground on which "Asia as method" takes shape and in which Oriental modernity becomes the primary problem that this "method" aims to resolve. For Takeuchi, "Asia as method" becomes possible only when Asia exists not "in substantive form," but accepts the not-yet-existing values that make up the "method." In this regard, Asia suggests no longer a geographical location or a stable cultural unity, but rather a movement of thinking that seeks an "accord" between concept and reality, or "a process of self-formation," to use Takeuchi's own words.

It is understandable that the proposal of "Asia as method" continues to be used and appropriated in the discussion of contemporary Asian humanities. Inspired by Takeuchi, Shih Shu-mei emphasizes the fragmentary feature within Asia and the momentum within the "method," thus demonstrating a viable case for producing theory in Asia and from Asia. The Sinophone is a case in point. For Shih, the idea and the reality of the Sinophone undermine the authenticity and unity of China (and Chinese-ness). Thus it becomes a concept that is

² The proposal of "China as method" by the Japanese scholar, Mizoguchi Kozo, replaces the West (Europe) with China as the sole criteria for reviewing Japanese modernity, and should also be added to this line of thinking.

able to bring about the re-configuration of China/Chinese-ness. Recognizing the formation of modern Chinese literature as a significant event in modern Chinese history that corresponds with the process of Chinese modernization and is deeply influenced by the West, Shih argues that its canonization implies an imperial consciousness, just like the Western imperial narratives.

What is most significant for Shih in Lu Xun's work, as Takeuchi has also discovered, is its articulation of a "minor literature" that may provoke "a nonessentialist understanding of European and Asian concepts and values" (473). By exploring the works of minor/minority Chinese writers both inside and outside China, Shih calls for the re-formation of modern Chinese literary canons and their history, thereby undermining the usual West-Asia binary framework that has grounded the narrative up to now.

The fact that Asian humanity condition is derived from the West-Asia binary framework has been one of Sakai's primary concerns. For Sakai, Takeuchi's thoughts on Oriental modernity and his proposal of "Asia as method" embody this unavoidable framework in which Asia lacks a genuine spirit of negation like its counterpart Europe. However, unlike Takeuchi, who regarded the encounter between Asia and Europe as unmistakable and self-evident, Sakai calls attention to the experience of "*discontinuity*" which occurs in their encounter and thereby disrupts the usual configuration of Asia in its relation to the West (459).

It seems that both Shih and Sakai are more concerned with the "discursive position" of Asia in the global cultural politics than the proposal of "Asia as method" itself, even though the meaning of "method" yet remains unclear. In other words, they are enquiring about the position Asia holds in the global cultural discourse that reflects a hierarchical power structure. Or to put it another way, how does such hierarchical power structure define the content and expression of Asia? With an emphasis placed on the agency and subjectivity of Asia, Shih argues that Takeuchi's proposal of "Asia as method" provides a solution to the question, "how can Asia be the location of theory?" (471). Here, Shih considers Asia as a "site" or "location," or more precisely, an "origin" of theory, so to speak. Confronting the West-Asia framework that speaks to the theory-reality binary opposition, what Shih attempts to accomplish is not so much a theoretical investigation of how Asia can become truly a "method" as a discourse that originates in the "location" of Asia instead of the West.³ A similar

³ I am not suggesting that Shih does not discuss the theoretical dimension of the method. In fact, Shih has explored the "method" with an emphasis on Asia's agency and subjectivity, and so one would have to admit that the theoretical momentum of the Sinophone is inspired by the method. What I am arguing is that Shih expresses her interest more in terms of the discourse of global cultural politics than in the meaning of the "method" itself.

situation can also be found in Sakai's discussion where the concern about Asian humanity as defined by the West prevails over his interest in the "method" itself.

Then, what does "Asia as method" exactly mean? Or to rephrase Takeuchi's words, can "Asia as method" be possible, and if so, how can it be possible? Takeuchi imagined not-yet existing Asian cultural values and called them "method," which he also recognized as "the process of the subject's self-formation" (165). As elusive as his statement may sound at first, the meaning of "method" does remain ambiguous.⁴ More intriguingly, even Takeuchi himself admitted that "it is impossible to definitively state what this might mean" (165).

Koyasu Nobukuni is one of many Asian scholars who continue to explore the problematics that concern Asia and attempts to develop a "method" that references Takeuchi's "Asia as method." His inventive use of the "method" deserves our attention. Like Takeuchi, who imagined an Asian subject grounded in Oriental or colonial modernity, Koyasu develops an "exterior perspective" as his "method" to review Japanese modernity and establish a solid foundation for Oriental resistance, as illustrated particularly by his title, *Edo as Method*. Koyasu argues that Takeuchi's "Asia as method," born out of his reflection on Asian modernity and Japanese modernity after the war, is not something like "Asia as substance" that was embraced by most pre-war Japanese intellectuals and propagated as an ideology of "overcoming modernity" (12). Koyasu insists that "Asia as method" functions as a "historical critical perspective," which implies the possibility of actually transforming Asian values and Asian modernity.

Following Takeuchi, Koyasu develops his own "method," that is, a historical critical perspective situation from the "exterior." As expressed in the phrase "Edo as Method," Edo serves as a vantage point exterior to modern Japanese history and thus can provide a critical perspective on modern Japanese history. And yet, "Edo as method," like its counterpart "Asia as method," does not exist in any actual substantive form. Therefore, Edo should not be confused with the "actual" historical era, that is, the Tokugawa regime that existed in the pre-modern period, as opposed to modern Japan after the Meiji restoration. Instead, Edo suggests a "method," that is a critical perspective to produce a review of modern Japanese history that constitutes itself as opposing the West while still chasing Western modernity as its sole objective (12-13).

Joyce Liu used to summarize Koyasu's "method" by comparing it to an analogue on the Foucauldian thought of the Outside. Based on his talks in Taiwan, Liu describes Koyasu's "method" as "the Other perspective excluded by the

⁴ With regard to the "method," Shih Shu-mei has offered a more essential reading of the concept by relating it to "agency and Asia's ability to subjectivize itself" (472).

imagined community of the Same” (6). In this sense, Edo serves as “the Other perspective” that can provide a different reflection on the limits of modernity. As a result, for Liu, the excluded Other is in fact the unseen and unsaid within the community already built on the logic of the Same (7). More significantly, “the Other” not only presents an “Outside/exterior” perceptive, but also a thinking movement that is constantly at war with what is seen and what is being said. Liu writes: “what Koyasu means by ‘Asia as method’ is moving continuum that continues to de-construct and re-construct a substantive Asia formed by the discourse and imperial hegemony, and Asia is the moving continuum as critical thinking” (7).

Without a doubt, Koyasu’s elaboration on the “method” has developed and deepened the potentiality of “Asia as method,” which Takeuchi proposed half a century ago. However, Koyasu’s “method” as an “exterior perspective” or “the Other perspective” is still too concrete and thus can easily be confused with a fixed viewpoint or a particular perspective. Further, the thinking movement activated by the “method” is often reduced to a difference and as an alternative to the Same. As Liu cautions, “in order to activate the thinking-movement . . . every point on the line of resistance should retreat from its given lineal direction in a singular way, instead of assembling homogeneously” (7). What Liu suggests then is to avoid substantializing and essentializing Asia, only to preserve Asia as a “method,” that is, a continuing thinking movement as an event.

A new concept of Asia is necessary, insofar as it emphasizes its thinking movement as a philosophical event and avoids “method” being reduced to only “methodology,” a concept associated too often with sets of rules and principles. It follows accordingly that the new concept of Asia consists of heterogeneous components that are inseparably located within itself to define the consistency of the concept, and more importantly, see it as a thinking movement. In that regard, it also creates new concepts. Therefore, the concept has two aspects—one relative to its own components, and the other considered in and of itself to be an act of thought.

As previously argued, in the development of the notion of “Asia as method” where method is concerned largely with concept, that method/concept itself has undergone a transformation in type and changed the problems that it seeks to resolve. For example, through the use of Sinophone articulation, Shih Shu-mei intensifies the fragmentary features of the “method” by linking it to minor/minority discourse, thereby undermining the unity of Chinese imperialism and the assumed West-Asia binary framework. Likewise, Koyasu replaces “Asia” with “Edo” to review Japanese modernity and at the same time make manifest the continuing thinking movement activated by this revised method.

These concepts are seen as heterogeneous components that constitute the concept of Asia, for example, a minor Asia, an alternative Asia, and a self-formed Asia, etc. The components are inseparable and define the consistency of the concept of Asia; they are correlated to one another as they are created to resolve the issue of Oriental or colonial modernity. In their conception of Asia, both Shih and Koyasu invented new concepts for Asia while also confronting new problems. Yet can we assume that this latter concept is more "advanced" or "better" than the earlier one? That is perhaps not the case. A new problem has arisen as a result, and a newer concept needs to be created, and if the latter can be considered "better," that it is precisely because that the concept brings about thinking for that new problem.

It should be noted as well that the concept of Asia presupposes the plane on which these concepts are created. If the concept suggests a thinking event, it follows that thinking requires a plane that is considered a "horizon" or "reservoir" of purely conceptual events that then makes the actual creation of the concepts possible. To envision a new concept of Asia, the double aspects of a philosophical event should be taken into consideration and not be confused with one with the other. If there must be a plane of Asia to sustain the concept of Asia, then, this plane should be recognized as neither the concrete concepts of Asia, nor the concept of its own method, but rather a plane of immanence or consistency and the absolute ground on which it rests to create its concepts.

Therefore, the concept of Asia has two meanings that supplement each other, namely, it indicates both the creation of the concepts of Asia and Asia as the immanence plane on which that concept is created. Seen in this different light, Asia suggests not so much a geographical local and cultural unity as a plane that envelops pure conceptual events, while the thinking movement of the concept still further develops that same plane.

In sum, proposing the new concept of Asia, which embraces concrete concepts as its components and the creation of concepts as a thinking event, prevents Asia from being recognized as a united entity and simply reducing "method" to a methodology, thereby restoring its thinking momentum from within. By the same token, to problematize Asia is to institute an immanent plane of Asia, while also creating new concepts of Asia to face a new situation. From this perspective, insofar as the creation of the concept of Asia can still retain the immanent plane of Asia and the thinking event is still enveloped while also developing its concepts, the powers of philosophical thinking can possibly be revived in Asia. It follows then that Asia is conceived of as a plane of immanence that presents an event rather than a transcendental order that assumes rules and principles. This answer may be the most profound response to Shih Shu-mei's

question, “Can Asia be the location of theory?” (471).

The Other Asia and the Figure of the Orphan

This paper proposes a new concept of Asia to emphasize its thinking movement, which produces a philosophical event to create new concepts. It also envisions Asia as an immanent plane that is in movement to create its own concepts. What is at stake in this new concept of Asia is the image of an “Other” Asia, namely, thinking of Asia “otherwise.” However, this Other Asia should not be confused with any alternative of Asia; it is neither the object of knowledge from another perspective, nor the subject that distinguishes itself from others, nor the special subject that constitutes itself through the process of self-formation. Rather, it indicates an a priori concept that all the correlated concepts are created and a condition from which the relationship between subject and object is then derived. In short, the Other Asia expresses a possible world of Asia wherein concepts can be recast and beings and affairs can be redistributed. It is indeed a virtuality with a potential to enact the process of becoming an “other” Asia.⁵

The previous discussion mentions that in developing his notion of “Asia as method,” Takeuchi used the figure of the *slave* depicted by Lu Xun to illustrate the ideal concept of Asia, that is, the state of being in “despair” and with “no path to follow.” Takeuchi regarded this state as a special form of Oriental resistance. The slave rejects the salvation suggested by the wise man because that salvation is merely subjective from the slave’s point of view, and the slave is still in a state of dreaming rather than awakening. Takeuchi argues that awakening from that dream “occurs only when the *slave* rejects his status as *slave* while at the same time rejecting the fantasy of liberation, so that he becomes a *slave* who realizes that he is a *slave*” (71). This understanding allows Takeuchi to link the

⁵ This idea of the Other Asia is derived from Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s concept of “the Other person” in their definition of a concept. They render a very different understanding of that concept, however. They write that “The other person appears here as neither subject nor object, but as something very different: a possible world, the possibility of a frightening world” (*What Is Philosophy* 17). By introducing this concept of the Other person, Deleuze and Guattari suggest that the concept of the Other person may entail the creation of a new possible world. It is thus worth comparing the concept of the Other Asia with Gayatri Spivak’s proposal of “Other Asias.” For Spivak, Asia should be plural instead of singular. More significantly, the term “other” not only indicates “another” Asia, but it also implies an “other” understanding of Asia. Spivak says, “‘other’ is not simply a matter of imaginative geography but also of discontinuous epistemes” (8). In contrast, the Other Asia emphasizes its thinking movement in which Asia becomes a process of becoming rather than a predicate adjective modifying a being.

slave to the state of despair that is then recognized as a resistance movement. Takeuchi writes that "Despair emerges in the resistance of following a path when there is no path, while resistance emerges as the activation of [that] despair" (71).

Takeuchi's particular interpretation of the slave derived from his strict criticism of Japanese modernity, especially when compared to its Chinese counterpart. Takeuchi argues that the profound meaning of despair as a movement of resistance is "what makes Lu Xun possible" (71). In this regard, the slave can be regarded as a conceptual figure who can facilitate the actual articulation of the very concept of "Asia as method." One may also argue that the slave constitutes a priori concept from which "Asia as method" then becomes thinkable and reasonable. Or more precisely, just as despair makes Lu Xun possible, the slave makes Takeuchi's concept of "Asia as method" indeed possible.

However, to consider the figure of the slave as the embodiment of the concept of the Other Asia and thus an expression of a possible new Asia seems insufficient, since in Takeuchi's conception of "Asia as method," Asia is often understood as a Western counterpart of knowledge, having a resistant modernity that is opposed to the West. In this regard, the famous novel, *Orphan of Asia*, by the Taiwanese writer Wu Zhuoliu deserves more attention. Given that new concepts continue to be created as new planes are laid out, the figures that embody the concept of Asia also undergo a similar process of transformations and mutations. This novel depicts the figure of an orphan that characterizes a colonial situation where the relationships between Asian countries are redefined, thereby leading to a new concept of Asia. Further, by tracing the orphan's journeys in various Asian areas and countries, the novel epitomizes Asia as a process of becoming an "other" Asia. Therefore, the concept of the Other Asia as an expression of "a" possible world instead of "the" specific Asia can be best illustrated by the figure of the orphan.

Wu began to write this autobiographical novel during World War II and published it in Japanese after the war. By the end of the war, Taiwan had been ceded by the Qing government to Japan and was then ruled by the Japanese colonial administration for five decades. Being a colonized subject during that time period, the protagonist of the novel, Hu Taiming, is forced to abandon the traditional Chinese training that he have received and enter the modern Japanese education system to learn modern vocational skills. Having experienced the insurmountable barriers between being the colonizers and being colonized, Taiming leaves for Japan to study with a hope to gain a new life and acquire advanced knowledge to modernize his native country. After discovering in Japan the same hierarchical structure between colonizers and colonized as he experienced in Taiwan, Taiming returns to his homeland filled with disappointment.

Taiming comes to realize that a modern and equal society is impossible in Taiwan under its colonial situation. Discontented with the ongoing social condition in colonial Taiwan, Taiming departs for China searching for an alternative society and an alternative life there as well.

Not surprisingly, Taiming's dream of a peaceful life and a fair society cannot be fulfilled in China due to the wartime turmoil. After all, the pastoral and idyllic image of China seen in classic poetry and the ideal society found in the ancient Chinese civilization has no match in reality. Further, during the Sino-Japanese war, Taiwanese identity was recognized by the Chinese as more Japanese than Chinese. For that reason, Taiming is accused of being a Japanese spy and jailed. Thanks to the great effort of his friends, Taiming is able to escape from China and return to Taiwan. Having suffered from the intensifying plight of self-identity and the predicament of the living conditions during wartime, Taiming goes insane, and ultimately, he disappears without a trace.

This novel that depicts a protagonist who suffers the plight of a traumatized identity clearly epitomizes the identity paradigm of the colonized subject. The experience of the protagonist symbolizes the typical Taiwanese intellectual during the colonial period, who witnessed the collision between the Japanese and Chinese civilizations and thus suffered the displacement of the self and the dislocation of national and cultural identities. This displacement also continued after the war and even intensified after the Chinese Nationalist government (the KMT Party) fled to Taiwan and continued to rule the island for decades. After China replaced Taiwan to obtain its legitimate seat in the United Nations in the 1970s, Taiwan lost most of its international allies and become isolated by the international community. Despite its economic growth and political democracy, Taiwan's national and cultural reality was long time ignored. This circumstance also explains why the term "orphan of Asia" originated in the novel is often used to describe the status quo of Taiwan, signifying an actual existence but with no identity.

Leo Ching observed the predicament of a Taiwanese identity, both personal and national, inscribed by the novel and rendered a profound meaning of the figure of the orphan in terms of its positioning in Asia and the world. He notes that the notion of orphan connotes the "impossibility of belonging to the 'family of nations' that undergirds the modern-colonial world system" and also the "impossibility of salvation within the colonial system" (204). The protagonist represents the dilemma of an identity, suggesting not only the impossibility of being Chinese and Japanese, but also the impossibility of being Taiwanese and yet not being Taiwanese. In a similar fashion, the figure of the orphan characterizes the status quo of Taiwan during that time, a nation that belongs to neither

Japan nor China.

More significantly, Ching further likens the figure of the orphan to Lu Xun's slave, arguing that the movement of the protagonist "is neither teleological nor dialectical," and thus his despair, "arising from his abandonment and nonattainment, points to a despair" of the slave alike (206). As depicted in the novel, Taiming's journeys to both Japan and China offer no dialectical synthesis for the protagonist to be able to "transcend" into a higher being within the Japanese-Taiwanese and Chinese-Taiwanese oppositions, but it does indicate an interruption of that dialectical process. When becoming Japanese and Chinese becomes impossible, the protagonist comes to realize he is like an orphan, rejecting his status as orphan and at the same time rejecting becoming any other identity. In this regard, Wu Zhuoliu's orphan is similar to Lu Xun's slave who despairs, but can find "no path to follow." They both exist in a state of incompetence, thereby processing their potential to enact a movement that is resistance.

Seen in this light, what the novel, *Orphan of Asia*, inscribes is not simply a historical situation wherein the drama of colonial identity paradigm is developed, but rather a vision of the precariousness of history and the impossibility of a stable identity for all colonized subjects. It does not aim at providing a national allegory to predict the fate of a nation, but rather it emphasizes the discontinuity and heterogeneity of that very allegory. In other words, through the figure of an orphan, the novel avoids an essential understanding of Asia and lets Asia become an "other" Asia that differentiates itself from the previous order. Seen in this new light, Taiming's movement in Asia constitutes a thinking event that leads to a new concept of Asia on the very ground that is Asia.

Further, this particular thinking mode and the action suggested by the novel is exemplified by its narrative structure and exilic imagination. Derived from his frustration at the colonial situation in Taiwan, Taiming's journeys to both Japan and China are driven by the desire to separate himself from the society; further, even when living in his homeland Taiwan, he is governed by the impulse of being-in-exile, highlighted by his imagination of an otherwise self and the society. As a result, that exile becomes not only the material resource for the protagonist's adventure, but also the capital narrative stock to use to redeem a series of personal, cultural, national, and historical debts. In other words, exile provides a scenario by which all the worlds of reality, history, and the self become intelligible (Lee 138).

It is through exile, both as the physical crossing of boundaries and the exilic imagination, that the narrative creates a liminal space wherein all identities are liberated and all affairs are suspended. Exile is the basis for the narrative imagination, and the protagonist seeks to capture a supplemental space, either

as an alien place or an imagined terrain, wherein he can review the affairs of the homeland and negotiate with strange territories. A parallel narrative structure is designed for just such a purpose. The romance with a Japanese girl in Japan resonates in Taiwan; the romance with the Chinese girl also reminds the protagonist of the previous occurrence. In a similar manner, China is initially imagined as an ideal “homeland” as opposed to the corrupted Taiwan, as does Japan.

The protagonist’s exile is thus an invitation to having a conversation and an exchange of experiences between the new and the old. Taiming continues to move across racial, national, and cultural boundaries, always confronting the dilemma of choosing between inside and outside, the known and the unknown. What the protagonist gains from this exilic action and his imagination is precisely the liminality provided by the narrative, a middle phase bounded on the one side by a willful separation from the self and society and on the other side by aggregation with both.

The narrative thus provides a scheme by which the protagonist can negotiate with previous experiences while envisioning an otherwise self and society. This negotiation itself actually involves the functioning of memory. It is evident that in that process, Taiming attempts to rediscover and reenact the values presumed by a memory already governed by the previous order from which he has escaped. As mentioned earlier, his various romances with female characters of different nationalities reminds him of the intricate relatedness of the past and the present, as if the past must always be engaged in the here and now. However, Taiming’s experience also makes it clear that the exilic mind refuses to stay in either the past or the present; rather, it projects the unknown through the experience of imagination.

Time thus plays a crucial role in the narrative. Through memory, Taiming tries to transform what has happened and what is happening; he brings together the past and the present to define the meaning of the present at the expense of the past. It is, therefore, worth noting that Taiming’s impulse of being-in-exile is governed by a hope. His decision to study abroad in Japan is supported by a hope as well, the hope that he can comfort his sorrow, regain a new self, and more importantly, win back the pride of being a colonized subject. Similarly, his sojourn in China is combined with his newfound confidence in the promise that an ideal society and a stable identity can indeed eventually be found. Finally, Taiming delivers a soliloquy in prison when brooding over his personal experience of being-in-exile, revealing his best understanding of history and time. His soliloquy stresses the temporalities of his personal history and recognizes the transience of life, but more importantly, it emphasizes the fact that his being in exile exists at a special convergence of time. Only through exilic imagination

can the past be brought back and engaged in the present to project the future. At this moment, Taiming's sorrow at his loss eventually leads him to a clear recognition of his mission, which is his separation from the old and his projection of a different alternative for the future.

It is in this perspective that the entire narrative can be regarded as a subjunctive mood. Subjunctive, as the anthropologist Victor Turner defines the term, is the "mood of a verb used to express supposition, desire, hypothesis, possibility, etc., rather than to state an actual fact, as the mood of 'were' in 'if I were you'" (101). For Taiming, his study abroad in Japan *might be* helpful to his search for a new life, and China *might be* an ideal society. What is at stake in this subjunctive mood by virtue of the exilic narrative is the creation of a liminal space wherein the protagonist can exercise a new being through negotiation with the past. Therefore, Taiming actually occupies the best possible world by engaging in a powerful rethinking of his situation while in the phase of the middle.

This is the image of the Other Asia that the novel, *Orphan of Asia*, offers through its narrative. A parallel narrative structure governed by an exilic imagination results in a medium through which Taiming can redefine the self in relation to other persons, so there is a relationship among different areas of a region during a specific historical time. He continues to move across personal, racial, national, and cultural boundaries, thereby creating a history of subjectivity in the flux of time. Taiming's movement also constitutes a thinking event in which he becomes an "other" person, which suggests a new concept of Asia, namely, the Other Asia.

It is precisely in this sense that the figure of the orphan can be considered as the embodiment of the concept of the Other Asia insofar as it expresses the possible Asia that takes shape in the narrative. The orphan should be treated neither simply as a character in the novel, nor a psychological type that reveals a colonized subject's plight, nor a metaphor that suggests the fate of a nation and culture. Instead it is all the possibilities that can be realized in the language of literature. Seen in this light, the figure of the orphan designates a possible Asian condition under which the relationship between Taiwan, Japan, and China can be redefined and all the affairs among them can be redistributed.

Hence, the concept of the Other Asia suggested by the figure the orphan is helpful to provide a framework to rethink the current situation in Asia. To rethink Asia is not imply to understand Asia from a new perspective or situate Asia within a new global power structure, but rather to problematize Asia as Asia. The concept of the Other Asia, therefore, provides the scenario for such an act of problematizing. It emphasizes a thinking movement while creating new concepts, and more importantly, it envisions a new possible world of Asia

wherein new concepts are invented. Asia exits as not simply a geographical place for recognition or a site for knowledge production, it instead provokes an Asia that is in movement engaging in a process of becoming other. As a result, the orphan will thus be perceived as an “other” person, whose movement will lead to a different conceptual space that will also then introduce a new Asia.

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「他者」亞洲：尋找亞洲的可能世界

摘要

本文探索亞洲概念化的相關問題。面對這一棘手的問題，本文回顧「亞洲作為方法」這一廣為人知的觀念，討論此一觀念發展相關的人文條件，而亞洲正是在此歷史脈絡中被概念化。此外，本文引介一個新的亞洲概念，強調其思想運動，此運動透過建構新概念而形成哲學事件。為了闡述這一新的亞洲概念，本文新鑄了「他者亞洲」一詞，並以台灣小說家吳濁流的著名小說《亞細亞的孤兒》為例加以說明。本文認為，重新將亞洲問題化不僅可能更新且更好地理解亞洲，同時更標誌亞洲思考力量實際復甦的特定歷史時分。

關鍵字：亞洲、亞洲作為方法、亞洲概念、思考事件、他者亞洲、《亞細亞的孤兒》

