

## **Moderator's introduction to the workshop**

Undeniably, China now has a global presence. Both the number of Chinese individuals migrating around the globe and the volume of Chinese merchandise entering the global market have been on a steady and rapid increase. China is enriching the domain of physical items and the domain of symbols and concepts across the world. Academia and the community of intellectuals in China are thus facing a new situation that they have never encountered in the past century.

China's empirical social science research will inevitably be carried out around the world as its citizens and goods reach all corners of the globe. Since carrying out social research and studies overseas constitutes an essential part of anthropological work as commonly practiced abroad, anthropology in China, with the anthropologists at the Department of Sociology in Peking University (PKU) as a vanguard, took the initiative at the beginning of the century to seize the opportunities provided by China's new global reach. A significant amount of organized anthropological fieldwork has been conducted in different overseas communities following disciplinary norms and ethics, producing ethnographic studies on lives in overseas societies. So far, about 35 PKU teachers and students have conducted their fieldwork on overseas societies. This has resulted in nearly ten domestic institutions producing about 70 overseas ethnographies covering more than 50 countries across the globe. Global coverage is starting to take form.

Ethnographic research on overseas societies in China focuses mainly on communities in Asia. This started in 2002

when Gong Haoqun, a PhD student in anthropology in PKU's Department of Sociology, decided to do his research in Thailand. Soon after, PhD students Kang Min and Wu Xiaoli respectively went to Malaysia and India for their research. Since then, students and researchers have gone beyond neighboring Southeast Asian and South Asian countries to carry out studies in Central and West Asia. Currently, Chinese researchers have done fieldwork in countries including Japan, Mongolia, the Philippines, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Singapore, Pakistan, Nepal, Israel, Turkey, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and regions like Taiwan and Hong Kong.

Fieldwork on everyday lives of people in communities in Asian societies carried out by anthropologists from China brings home a map of cultural diversity in Asia. Asia, among all inhabited continents, spreads across the most time zones. It also hosts all kinds of ecosystems ranging from polar regions and montane grasslands to deserts, plains and tropical forests. Asia has nurtured great civilizations in Mesopotamia, South Asia and China, and is also the home of significant world religions like Judaism, Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism and Taoism. No other continent is as diverse as Asia ethnically and linguistically. Asian countries each have their particular history, but they also share a similar experience of encountering the West in modern times. The development of social sciences in China requires field-based surveys and research in order to understand the world as it is. In the field of anthropology, the ethnographic study of Asia should be given priority, with the expectation that this will provide references or even a paradigm for studies of other regions. Field studies and research constitute the endeavor

of social scientists in China adjusting themselves to their nation's new global reach. Researchers also contribute to the process of training a new generation of scholars with in-depth understanding of cultures outside China and with analytical skills needed in international comparative studies. The Institute of Area Studies, PKU provides a platform for new students to meet, exchange thoughts and ideas, and progress together, and is sure to facilitate their stepping-forward from anthropological community studies to the broader multi-disciplinary area studies.

Gao Bingzhong

December 23, 2018

**The 14th Broadyard Workshop**  
**The People and Societies of Asia:**  
**Anthropological Fieldwork**  
**November 3, 2018**

The 14th Broadyard Workshop (博雅工作坊), convened by Prof. Gao Bingzhong from PKU's Department of Sociology, invited a panel of eight experts who have been conducting long-term fieldwork in different parts of Asia. Prof. Qian Chengdan, director of PKU's Institute of Area Studies (PKUIAS), noted in his welcome speech that this is the first academic activity ever held by the institute on anthropology. Anthropology is a field of great importance in modern social sciences, for it concerns people's lifestyles, their living conditions, their relationship to society, etc. In short, it concerns issues related to people, and a lot of laborious effort is demanded by the discipline when carrying out research. The form that this session of the Broadyard Workshop has taken is slightly different from those of former sessions, in that the eight panelists will each share with us in a detailed manner the fieldwork they have been doing in different parts of Asia. Their presentations will definitely be eye-opening, showing us how people live their lives elsewhere in the world outside China.

Kang Min, associate professor at the School of Asian and African Studies of Beijing Foreign Studies University, gave a lecture on the topic of "The 'Aletheia' of Anthropology – Malayan Society as an Example" based on years of fieldwork experience in Malaysia.

Her fieldwork was carried out in Kelantan state of Malaysia, a relatively conservative region where deep-rooted traditions are preserved, including a considerable number of Malayan traditional arts. The Malaysian Islamic Party is the major party in the region. She lived for 10 months in northeast Kelantan in a village of about 400 households with about 1,200 people. Its permanent residents are all Malaysians. There she conducted studies on the disciplining of the female body.

In Malaysia, Muslim girls undergo *sunat perempuan* (female circumcision) while they are still babies when they reach a month old. More often than not that this procedure is perceived as a traditional and ceremonial event, and it is considered to bear the intention of “warding off evil spirits.” It is rather different from the ceremony for Muslim boys – boys go through a religious “hair shaving” rite with Islamic characteristics. During kindergarten, society does not dictate how children must wear their clothes. There’s no need to wear headscarves and the gender differentiation between boys and girls is not obviously observed in daily life. When they start to go to grade school, children are gradually taught to be aware of the body’s intimate parts, a term in Islam used to describe parts of the body considered to be sexually attractive or provocative. Examples of these parts include the neck, ears, calves, and even a women’s singing voice. Women should not sing in public without specific reasons, and if one does enjoy singing, she should only do so in front of her family. Some scholars hold that the prohibition on women wearing outfits that highlight body

curves aims at preventing women from being stared at as if they were objects.

Islam has highly specific and strict dress codes, and the garments used to cover intimate body parts are seen by scholars as one of the means to segregate women from men. Another is to separate the two sexes. Boys and girls go to kindergarten together, but are strictly separated from the opposite sex in public places after they get into universities. Men and women do not mix in gatherings or assemblies. For example, in family events celebrating Mawlid, Muhammad's birthday, the hall is for males to perform religious activities and the kitchen is for females to prepare food, usually with a curtain in between the two rooms as a symbolic mark of separation. Similarly, brides and bridegrooms cannot sit together during weddings because of gender segregation, and have to be actually seated far away from each other.

Kang Min thinks that the disciplining of the female body reflects a struggle for power. As Pierre Bourdieu said, male-dominant society controls women's bodies through clothing, thus controlling society. In supermarkets in Kota Bharu, the capital city of Kelantan, cashier desks are divided by gender. This is a policy of the state government under the Islamic Party's control. The policy received a sharp rebuke from the United Malays National Organization. Last year, a charity event organized by a Chinese school was stopped halfway through by religious enforcement officers from Kota Bharu's city council, and the organizers were fined. The reasons given were that the event had had no authorization from the city council and that there had been a mixing of genders in some

activities during the event. According to the Entertainment Control and Places of Entertainment Enactment 1998, women are forbidden to participate in any kind of stage performance.

The modernization of Malaysia requires women to join in the labor force. However, while they are allowed to take part in public production, they are still excluded from the public arena. But women are not powerless in face of this sort of disciplining. They play a positive role in daily life, participate actively in economic activities, and are even able to express their discontent toward rules and restrictions on certain occasions.

Kang Min concluded that the most important asset of anthropology is its ability to draw the attention of society to the unspoken daily lives of ordinary people seldom heard in historical documents, archives, or media reports. Doing ethnography requires researchers to be there on the spot, learn the language used by research subjects and try to show through research the diversity and complexity of different societies, cultures and people. Moreover, doing anthropological fieldwork helps the researcher personally develop and contributes to a better understanding of others' cultures. Finally, the methodologies of anthropology help one achieve a better fusion of horizons between self and other, so that one may look at the world from the perspective of other parties, then eventually achieve the true good.

Shi Yang, associate professor at the Department of Southeast Asian Studies in the School of Foreign Languages of PKU, talked about his fieldwork in the Philippines on the topic of "The Cosmology of Witchcraft: The Spiritual Beliefs and

Witchcraft Treatment of Alangan-Mangyan People in the Philippines.”

His research subject is the Alangan-Mangyans on Mindoro Island, the Philippines. The group consists of about ten thousand people, who speak the Alangan language but have no written script. They live in typical Southeast Asian style houses built on stilts, usually several nuclear families living in one longhouse, each family with many kids all wearing barkcloth. The kids look similar and it's hard to distinguish one from another. The Alangan-Mangyans mainly rely on swidden farming, clearing hillside drylands with fire then planting on the burnt soil upland rice or root vegetables like sweet potatoes or taro.

Shi Yang said that his research was on the oral traditions of Alangan-Mangyan people. He observed that every day, they would perform all kinds of rituals in which they would act as if they were possessed by spirits or devils, leading himself to wonder about the meaning of these seemingly odd and bizarre actions. For example, an act of divination must be carried out before reclaiming a piece of dryland. They would kill a rooster and observe its form and shape to decide whether the field would have a high yield or not. Another example is observing the form and shape of the spleen of a slaughtered pig in an act of divination for information on whether an illness would be cured, or whether a certain misfortune could be vanquished. There are a whole set of rituals in the Alangan-Mangyan culture, and if we examine these rituals closely and try to fit them into one single system of logic, we will discover that the culture has its own integrated knowledge system built around its specific cosmology. The Alangan-Mangyan people see the world as



created and guarded by a creator god. They believe in a world in the skies, a world underground, and a human world. People have spirits and there are all kinds of spirits all over the world, which include both good spirits and evil spirits. The good ones are called *kamuruan*, and there is one special group of them which act as messengers between humanity and the creator god. The evil ones are called *mamaw*, which include *kablag*, which are spirits of the deceased. The ones who connect men and spirits or gods are *balaonan*, medicine men. The Alangan-Mangyans believe that most people's souls go up into the skies after they die, but the souls of those who have done bad things turn into *kablag* and return to where humans live. A dream of a recently deceased relative is considered a bad thing, for that the Alangan-Mangyans believe that one's soul, *abiyon*, can be taken away by the *kablag* and brought into the underground world, making one ill and die.

The Alangan-Mangyans believe that *mamaw* dwell across the world. Each *mamaw* has its name and specific appearance. One gets bad luck if harassed by *mamaw* in daily life. For example, if one came back from hunting in the woods and got sick, then it's because he was hit by the lance of *mamaw* in the woods and his *abiyon* was taken away. Meanwhile, *kamuruan* also exists all over the world and each of them has its name and function, like curing a headache or a stomachache. The leader of *kamuruan* is called the King of *Kamuruan*, and the leader's duty is to manage the *kamuruan* system. There is also a special being among the *kamuruan* that can convey human appeals to the creator god.

*Balaonan*, which means the one who prays, is the medicine man that calls *kamuruan* to come and fight with *mamaw* and drive them away. Shi Yang says that each *balaonan* has his or her own personal style of chanting, and after further research he found that besides repeating prayers like “O *kamuruan*, come and save this sick one,” *balaonan* also keep telling stories of *kamuruan*, including what have the *kamuruan* achieved and whom have they saved, etc. This pattern of traditional oral narration is seen by folklore studies as typical of legends or epics. It is a combination of folklore and treatment for illness.

There is a distinct and clear logic to the witchcraft treatments of the Alangan-Mangyans. The first step is to pray, hoping that *kamuruan* would come to aid the sick. The medicine man says, “If the *kamuruan* cures the patient, I will hold a ceremony.” Whether *kamuruan* come and offer a cure depends on oracles. Herein lies a chain of message transmission; the *balaonan* calls to the messenger *kamuruan*, the messenger then delivers the message to the creator god, and finally the creator god sends a certain *kamuruan* to perform the treatment. Each link connects closely with the one before.

Shi Yang states that through analyzing this system of logic, we can discover the cosmology of the Alangan-Mangyans. It is a system of views based on myths and legends that describe their world as they see it. Based upon this cosmology, a dualistic framework of the opposition between good and evil is formed. It is then shaped into a kind of belief through traditional oral narration and is infused into different ceremonies. Combining the three dimensions mentioned above, we can get a picture of the Alangan-Mangyans’ spiritual beliefs.

Healing by witchcraft constitutes two different levels. One is treatment in its narrow sense of treating an illness. The other is treatment in its broad sense of fending off misfortune and protecting oneself from disasters. Witchcraft hasn't changed along with the modernization of the society. Instead, its manifestation occurs at higher levels with the help of literature and folklore. Witchcraft and ceremonies act as a vehicle for the system of myths and legends, which in turn provides the belief system of the dualistic opposition between good and bad. This belief system when practiced in daily life, is so-called "witchcraft." To put it simply, witchcraft consists of the spells and magic created by people based on a mythical world in order to survive and reproduce. It is viewed as a means to realize certain objective wishes and hopes.

Shi Yang says that studies of foreign cultures, including witchcraft, are helpful in understanding the most basic concepts in science. For example, most people's perception of illness today derives from modern Western medicine and is mainly about pains suffered by the physical body. However, if we extend the concept, illness can also refer to negative effects on the body or soul caused by bad experience. In the relatively un-modernized traditional society of the Alangan-Mangyan people, the definition of illness is the inharmonious relationship of humans to society, which includes becoming stricken by sickness or misfortune. Treatment through witchcraft is therefore required, with the aim of healing and recuperation on the one hand, and soothing pains brought by the illness mentally on the other. The witchcraft treatment system of the

Alangan-Mangyans therefore serves as a source of spiritual sustenance, constantly providing psychological suggestions.

Wang Yu, an associate professor from the School of Foreign Languages, PKU, gave a speech entitled “Israel’s Jewishness and Democracy from the Perspective of a Foreign Scholar.”

Wang Yu said that Israel is a Jewish country, whose nature was confirmed by a series of legal documents. These include the Balfour Declaration that declares Britain’s support for Jewish people to build a nation in Palestine, and the 1947 United Nations Partition Plan. The foundation of Israel is based on both divine and historic rights. The historic claim is that Jews once built a country on the land over 2,000 years ago. The divine claim stems from God and is based on religious notions. When Israel declared its nationhood in 1950, it claimed that Israel would become the homeland of all Jewish people around the world and open its doors for immigration. Then Israel passed the Law of Return, claiming that all Jews as well as their descendants and spouses can come to Israel and become Israeli citizens at any time. This law is highly disputed in Israel and around the whole world. The law is considered to be too Jewish and a form of discrimination against non-Jewish people such as homeless Palestinian refugees who can’t return to their land in Israel. In terms of these disputes, Israel says that the law is not discrimination against non-Jewish people, but rather gives extra privileges to Jews because Israel is a Jewish country. In July 2018, Israel passed the Basic Law: Israel as the Nation-State of the Jewish People, also called the Nation-State Bill, which

announces that Jewishness precedes all other national characteristics including democracy.

The Israeli Declaration of Independence claims to abandon differences between religions, races and gender, to protect citizens' rights of political and social equality, to guarantee freedom in religions, education and culture, and to protect all holy land of religions. Israelis met most of these requirements. They built a democratic country in the Western sense, implemented the separation of powers and conducted democratic elections. Arabs had the right to vote during Israel's first congressional election in 1949. Arabic and Hebrew were official languages after the foundation of Israel. However, Arabic is no longer an official language but a language with special significance after the adoption of the Nation-State Bill. This indicates that real equality between Jewish and non-Jewish citizens has not been realized.

Israel's Jewishness is reflected in its incomplete separation between the state and religion. Representatives of the religion can participate in politics, parliamentary elections and even coalitions, in the form of parties. Furthermore, religious authorities can intervene in public and individual life. For instance, there is no secular matrimonial agency in Israel, which means all marriages should be registered by their own religious agencies. Marriages won't be admitted and registered if they do not accord with religious rules. In this way, religion runs through all aspects of the society, even though Israel is a secular country, with Judaism acting as a state religion.

From the aspect of civil rights and obligations, Jewishness is above democracy when there is a conflict between the two.

For example, although there are no written laws regarding preferential treatments for Jewish people and inferior treatment for Arabic people, some stipulations still exist, indicating what kind of people can get privileges and what special conditions should be achieved to get such privileges. In this way, Jews and Arabs are treated differently.

Wang Yu said that some changes can be felt in Israel in recent years. For example, there are few Italian restaurants in Jerusalem as Italian food does not comply with Jewish laws against mixing meat with dairy products. Some citizens moved out of Jerusalem due to the city becoming increasingly religious, with consequent impacts on their children's education and their daily life. In addition, an increase in religion in civic life also affects Israel's diplomacy. For example, many Jews and nationalists will not give up building settlements on the west bank of Jordan River since it used to be the land of Jews. This is a vital obstacle to peace talks between Palestine and Israel.

Ultra-orthodox Jews in Israel live in concentrated areas and are shut off to the outside world. They manage their communities according to their own ideas and supervise other people's lifestyles as well. In order not to be influenced by modernization, they refuse to use mobile phones, the Internet and the other modern technologies. If the communities require any important notices, traditional posters and loudspeakers are usually employed. Orthodox Jews don't have to work for or serve in the army. Instead, their living costs are supported by their country or some foreign countries and religious study is taken as their career, with a total rejection of secular education. Nevertheless, lots of orthodox Jews are against the existence of

Israel because mainstream Jews opposed Zionism before the establishment of Israel. Zionism was regarded as a secular movement. In their opinion, the diaspora is God's will, so Jews are not supposed to build countries or establish laws by means of political movements or wars, which are considered to be an abandonment of God's laws. In addition, orthodox Jews strictly observe regulations from religious texts. For example, female Israelites can get married when they are 15 years old as long as they obey religious rules, allowing them to have many children. Furthermore, in terms of the settlement issue, orthodox Jews believe that there is no need to return land to Palestinians since it is land from God.

Wang Yu believes that Israel is quite tolerant toward orthodox Jewish communities. In the early days after the establishment of the country, confronted with the shock of modernization and secularization, Jewish communities sensed a crisis. They gathered strength from the whole community to support their best students to study. The whole community would support these students in order to allow them to focus on their studies. This obligation of the communities has become a duty of the country. Many people expected that the power of orthodox Jewish communities would shrink. However, on the contrary, their power expanded due to their high fertility rate and the increasing political influence of religious parties.

For example, the Israeli government has to protect new settlements created by orthodox Jews, although the government does not fully support these new settlements. This kind of tolerance is a significant manifestation of Israel's Jewish character.

How will Israel's religiosity develop in the future? Israel's Minister of Education once stated in public that education in Judaism is more important than the study of mathematics. This comment received great support from many religious parties. Wang Yu thinks Israel's changing demographics will lead to the negative result of a rise in its religiosity and Jewish character as time passes by.

Zhao Xuan, a lecturer from the Institute of Global Ethnology and Anthropology, Minzu University of China, gave a speech entitled "Israeli-Palestinian Conflicts from an Anthropologic Perspective," focusing on Israeli-Palestinian relations.

Zhao Xuan said that there is a common idea in the research of international issues, especially in geopolitics, that territory is the underlying cause behind the Israeli-Palestinian conflicts. Territory would be the driving factor behind issues over the future of the Gaza Strip, the west bank of the Jordan River, settlement construction, and so on. Yet what's behind the territory issue is the fundamental appeal of a nation-state, which can trace back to Westphalian system and US President Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points. This appeal is a trinity of territory, sovereignty and population. The mainstream research paradigm for approaching the Israeli-Palestinian conflict at home and abroad is the perspective of geopolitics. The view of territory that is based on political geography and geopolitics was established in the mid-to-late 19th century when a wave of nationalism arose and nation-states were built gradually. In 1980s, and especially after the ending of the Cold War in 1990s, some sociologists and anthropologists in the Western world who



criticized geopolitics and border studies focused on a discussion of territory. They wanted to shift the discourse from territory to population, and from geopolitics to life politics. They hoped the concept of “territory” would have a more abundant connotation, involving not simply “land” but judicial systems and political techniques, becoming a more comprehensive concept. In addition, the concept of territory was further amended by these scholars, turning from state centrism that emphasizes stability and foreseeability to the process of historical construction participated in by multiple subjects, in which the country is only an actor. Territorial contention was considered to be a kind of social conflict, which could be presented by individuals or institutional groups within society.

On the methodology level, researchers of feminism in the 1980s were the first to introduce ethnography to the study of international relations.

Geopolitics was no longer considered to have only a top-down path of development, but also influenced by bottom-up power.

These transitions in theories laid the foundation for conducting Israeli-Palestinian conflicts studies with ethnographic methods.

According to Zhao Xuan’s introduction, his field work took place in Olive Hill in East Jerusalem. Israel was founded in 1948, and Israel captured the whole of Jerusalem during the Six-Day War in 1967. From the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993 until the construction of the separation barrier in 2000, we can see that Israel’s means of control of Jerusalem has shifted from military force to municipal administration. This indicates

that Israel has said goodbye to the period of so-called national wars, and shifted to the construction of a municipal system. The Israeli government is attempting to make Jerusalem an organic component of Israel by means of municipal administration. This approach doesn't completely depend on the army or other national violence machines but relies on a series of international agreements and political negotiations to achieve this goal. Through legislatures, the municipality and the absorption and utilization of local Arab families, the Israeli government has integrated Jerusalem into the social structure of Israel. Meanwhile, Palestine's resistance to Israel's municipal process imposed restrictions and forced negotiations on the process. Palestine's resistance to the Israeli municipal process is not only through simple violent conflicts, but also through the constraints coming from endogenous forces of the society such as family ties.

Zhao Xuan conveyed the situation he witnessed during his local field work focusing on the settlement issue. He states that settlements can be divided into several categories. Jewish people built some settlements in the early days of their return, which were located in deserts in the south or coastal areas in the west. These types of settlements gradually developed into cities or agricultural centers, such as Tel Aviv, a city developed from settlements.

Another type is community settlements such as semi-closed paramilitary communities on the West bank of the Jordan River.

The third type is embedded settlements. In areas with high concentrations of Palestinians in eastern Jerusalem stand some

single-family houses with big Israeli flags, which local Arabic people call settlements.

Zhao Xuan told three stories about Arab-Jew conflicts triggered by real estate sales in eastern Jerusalem.

He indicated that for modern Arabs, especially Palestinians, land does not only mean property but also has political, religious and identity implications. In this context, Israeli-Palestinian conflicts shift from the national level to inter-family or even intra-family level, and thus territorial disputes unfold in diverse and complex ways.

Land, as a broader concept, prompted researchers to include non-state subjects in their research.

Zhao Xuan pointed out that if we suppose the nation-state, as a concept that emerged after the 19th century, constitutes the fundamental driving force for Israeli-Palestinian conflicts and forms the basic framework of Israeli-Palestinian conflicts along with the two concepts of religion and ethnic groups, then seen from an anthropologic perspective, is this framework unique? Does it cover all stories about Israeli-Palestinian conflicts? What should be recognized first is that the focus of territorial disputes is municipal construction not military conflicts. Daily municipal planning, land acquisition and flow management are all manifestations of territorial competition. Consequently, this suggests two problems.

First, why did Jews and Arabs become enemies? If space is not a contended objective thing in a model of sovereign justice, but a dynamic factor in the production and reorganization of rights and relations, then territorial contention is not a struggle for territory, but rather a struggle to reshape the relationship

between us and the others by means of territorial contention, and to repeatedly reshape the order. Land is not the objective of the struggle, but rather the stage of human relations whose spatial dimensions and meanings are constantly changing. Therefore, the politics of land is fundamentally the politics of humans, and disputes of territory are actually disputes of human differences. Second, who are the enemies? The relationship between the enemy and us is always changing, which constantly enters into more complex dimensions with the adjustment of spatial levels. The facts of hostility among sovereignties could not cover the diversification and contextualization of enemies in routine social life, which, in turn, raises questions about the “fault line” of conflicts established between Palestine and Israel by ethnic groups. We can say that the identity of the enemies and the reason why they are enemies are not the result of “sovereign decisions.” Instead, it is a dynamic process of daily life.

Zhao Xuan stated that the separation barrier exists not only for separation but also to combine Israel with the west bank of Jordan River in social and municipal management aspects. From this perspective, the separation barrier is not a “line” but an expression of political techniques.

In the interactive session, several speakers answered questions from the audience.

Question: I have a question for Shi Yang. Where do your sources come from, local wizards or ordinary people? I ask because due to different standpoints of different people, they would provide different information. Also, is the conceptual framework of the dualistic opposition between good and bad an idea from modern sciences or a concept originated by locals?

Lastly, concerning the issue of transition, is the community still the same as when you first studied it? We know that Alangan-Mangyan people do not really believe in witchcraft but waver between belief and doubt.

Shi Yang: My dedicated study on this problem started in 2007. It took me five or six years, during which I went to over 20 villages and interviewed over 100 people. The investigation report is based on the interviews with them, which is generally representative because the interviewees include elites and the public. My ethnographic work aims to have a deep understanding of the ethnic group but an ethnic group is changeable. The witchcraft system we see nowadays is the most suitable manifestation for them under current modern social and economic conditions, in that they are not able to get access to modern medicine. Thus, witchcraft is the only way of medical treatment for the economically poor natives living on the mountains. If you understand many indigenous societies in Southeast Asia, you would find that a number of natives who live in distant mountainous areas are always on the edge of society and continuing their lives in their own way. Perhaps transitions in the future will change them as well, but the belief in witchcraft would still be their basic world view. This situation is similar to traditional Chinese culture, which has a different form of expression in modern society.

Question: In terms of the ultra-orthodox Judaism Wang Yu mentioned, it holds that diaspora is a better situation and Jews should accept what God gives them. Why do they only go to Israel and not to other places like Southeast Asia, Japan or China?

Wang Yu: Settling in God's promised land is a requirement for Jewish people in the Bible. Another vital reason is that all the relatively large Jewish communities in Europe were slaughtered during World War II and after the foundation of Israel, Jewish people living in other countries could not stay due to the existence of Israel. Therefore, they believe that Israel is the land given by God where they are supposed to live, even if they don't like Israel. Nevertheless, some religious Jewish people hold the opinion that modern Israel is a tool which currently exists to fight against Palestine. They hold Israel will become a theocracy after the war, which would push forward the arrival of the Savior. The settlement construction in the west bank of the Jordan River has also changed. After the war in 1967, Israel expected to expand strategic depth through establishing settlements. However, the signing of Oslo Accords in 1993 made religious Jews realize that their promised land would probably be returned to Palestinians for the sake of peace. For this reason a large number of Jews settled there spontaneously in spite of government bans. Hence, what orthodox Jews are considering now are not the interests of their country but the longer-term views of the Messiah, Savior and such kinds of things.

Wu Xiaoli, an associate research fellow at the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, gave his presentation on the theme of "A Field Investigation of India: Daily Life and Social Fabric."

She said her first trip to India was to Kerala state, which is located in the far west of India and is a narrow green land. Kerala state is not a major urban area, but mostly small towns.

The houses there are not high. Modernization is completely inferior to some prefecture-level cities in China, but local architecture is quite beautiful. After living in the state capital for four or five months, Wu Xiaoli went to a village 30 kilometers away from the capital. Due to the close distance to the capital as well as the small gap between urban and rural areas, many people living there are not farmers. There are civil servants and those who work for social organizations. Although the modern facilities in Kerala are very ordinary, the local economy and cultural life are quite rich.

When chatting with villagers, she was often asked about her religious beliefs. She replied she is not religious but interested in Buddhism. Villagers were not satisfied with this because they wanted to identify her community identity through religion. She said when she first arrived in Kerala, she felt the interpersonal relationships were somewhat similar to those in China. Outsiders do not feel a sense of estrangement, thanks to the strong acceptance and inclusiveness of South Indian society. As time passed, she understood the local community more. Religious identity came first. There were three large local religious communities: Hindus, Muslims and Christians. The boundaries between them were clear. Each of the local religious groups is familiar with the religious culture of Hinduism, and images of Shiva and Ganesha can be seen everywhere. In the beliefs of people in Kerala, the belief in goddesses is very important.

Wu Xiaoli said that many introductions to Hinduism are available in some religious texts. These introductions refer to the importance of “detachment.” But in temples, people pray for

happiness. Although they know about the concept of detachment and the afterlife, this is not what they are concerned about. Therefore, the religion observed through fieldwork and described in texts is very different. Hinduism has undergone a dramatic change since the 19th century. The “law” is a very important concept in Hindu texts and in traditional social fields, but this idea is hardly mentioned during people’s lives. People often mention the concept of “karma” when explaining many things in the world.

Wu Xiaoli said that Hinduism is taken for granted. People don’t have to believe in a certain god, because as long as they live in this environment, they cannot avoid the influence of Hinduism. So, although many people claim that they don’t believe in God, they still reveal their cultural background in Hinduism by the many details of their lives.

Besides relatives and friends, local people also have another important social relationship, that is, “community.” This word is actually euphemistically used for caste. Considering caste is an ideologically “incorrect” concept, many people will not directly indicate their caste, but will indicate the community they belong to, which also reflects that the caste system still regulates people’s lives to a large extent, especially in private life. Therefore, “community” has a specific meaning in India.

Wu Xiaoli concluded that when doing research overseas, many people consider whether their research has a practical correlation with China. She thinks this is biased. For example, some articles interpret Chinese issues based on an understanding of Indian issues while neglecting the complex Indian context of the issue. This attitude is unfair to India, a civilization with a



long history and a complex society. In addition, simply drawing a conclusion about India only based on one's understanding and experience of a part of India in a short time is not scientific. It is necessary to rely on in-depth research to find the roots of all aspects behind specific issues, analyze these issues with a historical horizon, and have a clear understanding of these issues.

Gong Haoqun, an associate professor of the Institute of Global Ethnology and Anthropology at the Minzu University of China, gave a speech titled "Beyond 'Me' and 'He': Rethinking Anthropology Based on an Experience in Thailand Studies." In her speech, she explored neoliberal research in anthropology, relating it to her own fieldwork in Thailand.

Gong Haoqun said that people engaged in political economics are concerned with what happens in political economics system. In contrast, many anthropologists in the 1990s were particularly interested in neoliberalism and spiritual anthropology studies. In neoliberalism, when an individual's achievement entirely depends on himself, it is necessary to transform the individual emotionally. Some researchers point out that individuals are actually defined in neoliberalism as self-driven, autonomous economic actors who always respond to market changes. This idea has become the core of neoliberalism.

Researchers in neoliberal critical ethnography studies are interested in how to observe the economic and cultural transformations in the social structure.

As a result, some anthropologists have put forward critical studies focused on neoliberalism.

The study of religion under neoliberalism can be divided into two paths. One is the study of the economy of the mysterious. For example, people in Thailand worship God to cope with uncertainty in life, or to solve poverty and other problems. This economy of the mysterious is considered to be a magical means of mobilizing the human imagination to achieve material goals. The other is the economy of the spiritual, which combines economics with religious concerns. The economy of the spiritual was spawned by the neoliberal economy. It emphasizes the importance of individuality, universality and self-cultivation. It holds that the economic achievement of individuals has nothing to do with the worshiping of God but rather one's self-improvement. Some researchers posit that the spiritual economy does not regard religion as a means of escaping or confronting the transformation brought about by neoliberalism, but a plan to transform workers into more passionate religious actors and more productive economic actors.

Gong Haoqun opined that both economy of the mysterious and the economy of the spiritual exist in Thailand, but the relationship between new religious forms and the goals of modern political life has been neglected. Especially in the context of Thailand, where political turmoil has become the core issue of society, people cannot ignore the connection between religion and politics.

How does neoliberalism's concern about individuals change people's understanding of politics? How do new forms of religion respond to the political transformation in the new context of liberalism? These are all questions raised through

research, so Gong Haoqun hoped to understand the relationship between the religious practice of the middle class in contemporary Bangkok and the neoliberal economy and political transformation from a new perspective.

Gong Haoqun traveled to Thailand for fieldwork during the summer vacation of 2013 and the winter vacation of 2015, each time for one month. In the 2013 fieldwork, she was exposed to the physical and mental techniques of Buddhist practice, which taught practitioners how to breathe, walk, eat, and how to use gestures to help practitioners enter a state of meditation. It is a completely different form of religious life from the religious etiquette in countryside. In 2014, a military coup took place in Thailand. When Gong Haoqun went to Thailand again a year later, the class division between rural Buddhism and urban Buddhism was very obvious. The political attitude of practitioners became clearer, which once again showed that religion and politics are inseparable.

Gong Haoqun said that she observed that in Thai villages, people dressed up very beautifully at festivals and happily went to the temple, but at the Buddhist ceremonies of the middle class in Bangkok, people mainly discussed the meaning of suffering, why there is so much suffering, and how to be free from suffering. They believe that religion should be more important than morality. Religion is to teach people to free themselves from suffering, rather than telling them how to be good people. Good people are often unable to free themselves, because good people always feel that they owe the world, and therefore live a very painful life. There are also many interviewees who claim that Buddhism is a science about “bitterness.” Buddhism brings

people wisdom, and is structured to make people think that practicing Buddhism is scientific. No matter what religion people believe in, they can achieve liberation through Buddhist practice. As for social problems such as poverty, Buddhists believe that there is actually no real poverty. Any poverty comes from people's excessive desire. If people can understand that their desires are unreasonable and then adjust their inner heart, they will not feel that they are poor. If all individuals think they have no problems, and self-cultivation can help people see there are no problems, then there will be no problems in society.

Gong Haoqun spoke about her participation in an activity in a temple in Bangkok. She said that practitioners believe that during the practicing of Buddhism, physical techniques are the initial approach to become a Buddhist believer. These techniques require the practitioners to examine their inner heart for the sensations of their bodies. Individual liberation is the ultimate goal of the practitioner. The core of religion is to stop suffering. The root of pain lies in desire. Buddhists think that solving personal problems is the prerequisite for solving social problems.

Gong Haoqun concluded that in the context of Thailand, spiritual practice is a kind of spiritual politics. Through spiritual practice, middle class individuals became more passionate religious actors and political actors with a stronger consciousness of individual values. In their religious practice, they also have political concerns. However, they believe it is the individual who determines whether politics and society are good or not. They also serve society, but the purpose of the service is not to change the system, but to change the individual and let

everyone change themselves, which is their philosophical foundation. In addition, spiritual politics also includes the following dimensions: the individual's liberation is regarded as the highest value of Buddhism and the highest goal of spiritual training; the liberation of the individual is the basis for solving social problems, and all social problems can be attributed to defects of individual spirituality, which can be solved through spiritual training. Gong Haoqun believes that spiritual politics is not only a reflection of the political situation, but also affects practitioners' understanding of state power. The people's attention may switch from reforming social and political systems to changing their inner heart. Putting no emphasis on fairness and justice means denying the importance of social and political reform. If spiritual politics means evading conflicts in political and social transformation through self-salvation, then seen from the current situation of the middle class in Thailand, the prospect of solving such political conflicts is very weak.

Li Rudong, an assistant research fellow from the Collaborative Innovation Center of Belt and Road Construction and Central Asia Studies, Shaanxi Normal University, delivered a speech entitled "Society and Culture During Political Transition: An Overview and Some Reflections on the Field Research on Dungan Communities in Kyrgyzstan" based on his own fieldwork.

Li Rudong said the whole of Central Asia underwent considerable social and political transitions during the creation and disintegration of the Soviet Union. Many people think the social reconstruction that started after the Soviet Union built collective communes changed the form of social organization in

Central Asia from individual farming using irrigation or animal husbandry to collective farming. The originally shared Islamic culture and Turkic culture was gradually divided by the Soviet ethnic policy into ethnic cultures that belonged to Uzbeks, Kazakhs and Kyrgyzes respectively. The ethnic language of the Dungan ethnic group was “created” in the corresponding process of ethnic politics. The above-mentioned institutions and policies experienced new changes after the disintegration of Soviet Union. For one thing, these countries transformed from republics of the Soviet Union to countries with presidential or parliamentary systems. For another, although these countries accepted the basic ethnic delimitation pattern established by Soviet policies and thus did not rename ethnic groups, the countries introduced changes into ethnic politics. First of all, the major ethnic groups in these countries spared no effort to highlight their ethnic culture and endow their language with official status. Meanwhile, the executive of ethnic policies was dissolved while a new ethnic conference was founded. Not all ethnic groups are members of the conference. Only when the number of individuals in an ethnic group reaches a certain level can this group have representatives who are able to enter the congress through the ethnic conference and then participate in political activities. Ethnic groups with a sparse population do not enjoy this opportunity. Significant changes also occurred in the presentation or understanding of history, which can be exemplified by the case of Kyrgyzstan. The history of Kyrgyzstan has been rewritten, and the epic story of Manas can be found everywhere, presented as a symbol or written in myths and legends. While new symbols are constantly emerging, the

spatial features, symbols and conventions inherited from the Soviet Union are still in use. It is in the context of continuous influence from the Soviet Union that the new major ethnic group attempts to endow a country with new content. In this course, the Dungan ethnic group has started to extend its social and cultural networks. This process is based on some specific forms of social organization.

Li Rudong said that the first form is ties of kinship. Dungan people call their kinsfolk *qinqin* (relative), but the meaning of *qinqin* is different from the routine family relationship in anthropology. This term also refers to many relations based on rationality rather than consanguinity. Although the family pattern in Dungan communities was changed to a certain extent by the Soviet social reconstruction of collective farms, some Dungan groups still maintain ties with extended family after the disintegration of the Soviet Union. While they live in different houses in the same village, the basic family income is under unified management and distribution by the patriarch. Meanwhile, new nuclear families have continuously been split off from the larger family. After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the family pattern of Dungan groups not only includes the renewed extended family, but also witnesses a transition to nuclear families. In the Soviet era, however, family relationships were always an appendage of the interpersonal network in collective farms.

The second form is *lianshou*. The meaning is similar to *zu* (group) in Chinese but refers to peers. While the ties of kinship based on rationality, consanguinity and marriage all have homogeneity to a certain extent, peers are only divided by

gender, but not by ethnic group or religion. Usually, there is an age gap within three years among members of the same group of *lianshou*. Even if two members of a group of *lianshou* are relatives, the younger still calls the elder *lianshou*. *Lianshou* also exist among the older age groups, but unlike young people, the elders have turned their peer groups into a cooperative relationship, members of which are usually business partners. They establish institutions to support peers with credit guarantees for each other.

The third form is the village community, which carries multifaceted meanings, according to local people who were interviewed. First, it can refer to a small group like the one that attends today's seminar. Second, it also refers to people in the same village, or even beyond the boundaries of this village, though it cannot represent the larger Muslim community. The extended village community also lays the foundations for Dungan people to build social networks.

The final two forms are marriage and business. Despite the principle of endogamy, many Dungan people have broken the rule in practice to marry Russians or other Muslims. Some Dungan elites even regard a marriage to distinguished Kyrgyz families as an important way to accumulate political capital. For the Dungan people, business refers to all activities of buying and selling goods or services, usually consisting of three forms of trade — attending fairs, running shops and conducting cross-border trade. Interestingly, kinship, peers, and marriage are all elements of building up commercial networks during the course of trade, which indicates an overlap between social and economic networks.



Li Rudong pointed out that the culture and identity of Dungan people have changed during the political transition. One reason behind this adjustment is that the Dungan people have been deeply influenced by Russian and Soviet culture. In addition, because of the resurgence of Islam in Central Asia after the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the increasing influence from China, the Dungan people often use different descriptions when they express their own identity. However, the Dungan people prefer the culture of the Soviet Union and their ancestral home with regard to cultural identity whereas they appear to favor Kyrgyzstan with respect to political identity.

Li Rudong opined that the social and cultural networks of the Dungan people have constantly interacted with the steady political transition. In the course of this interaction, they are gradually becoming less marginalized. When a major ethnic group endows the new country with new content, the old social network and culture remain influential to a certain extent, and can be used to participate in the national political transition.

Ayinuer Ainiwaer, a doctoral candidate in anthropology from PKU's Department of Sociology, delivered a speech entitled "A Rethink on Fieldwork in Uzbekistan."

She said that her yearning for exploring Uzbekistan is derived from her childhood experience of watching an Uzbek movie, *The Magic Apple*. Watching the movie, she found that Uzbek people are very cordial and the Uzbek language seemed quite familiar. However, she has realized after her personal visit to this country that both language and other aspects of Uzbekistan are rather different than she previously imagined.

Her fieldwork was conducted in Tashkent, capital of Uzbekistan, where the major ethnic group that accounts for 65 percent of the population lives together with many other ethnic groups. Despite the considerable disparity between Tashkent and China's metropolises, the capital is still Uzbekistan's economic and cultural center. After selecting two local communities as the object of ethnographic studies, she encountered a lot of difficulties in her research, including a thwarted distribution of questionnaires in these communities, a failure to get in touch with local male interviewees, difficulty in gaining trust from local residents and so on. Facing these difficulties, she tried her best to successfully complete the research work, gaining a lot of experience. She pointed out the importance of grasping the particularity of field research. Information can be collected by adjusting research methodology and switching the way of approaching the subject. Meanwhile, establishing a reciprocal relationship with the subjects of the research is conducive to the reciprocity of knowledge outcome from both sides. Fieldwork is a process that starts with facing unfamiliarity and ends with being loath to end the research. From the perspective of the research subject, the field does not belong to "the other;" instead, it is an interaction between "you" and "me." In the field, the boundaries between research and life are highly blurred. In many cases, fieldwork is not only a research process, but also a test of a researcher's ability to understand others, communicative attitudes and sense of responsibility.

In the interactive session, the audience put several questions to the experts based on their speeches.

Question: Prof. Li Rudong, according to your field research, what language do Dungan people in the village of Sokuluk speak when talking to outsiders?

Li Rudong: There is a generation gap in this regard. Generally, the elderly speak the Dungan language while the young that have grown up after the disintegration of the Soviet Union have a better grasp of Russian as well as Kyrgyz. Even though the older generation can speak Kyrgyz, they acquire this linguistic skill from communication rather than by learning.

Question: Prof. Li Rudong, you mentioned that the five Central Asian countries are establishing new nation states and starting political and cultural transition, and Dungan people seem to fit in well with the changes. Will the influence of a changing external environment endow them with a sense of pluralism?

Li Rudong: During the construction of a nation-state, the major ethnic group has continuously promoted the de-Sovietization and de-Russianization process and constantly highlighted its dominant position. In this process, Dungan people have witnessed many conflicts of identities and even realities. Their ultimate method of responding is to constantly emphasize the strictness of religious practice and conduct a reverse narrative of nationalism. While they recognize they have been marginalized on the one hand, they have developed a closer intimacy with the dominant ethnic group on the other hand and adopt a non-nationalist discourse to express their nationalist demands. For example, they resolve conflicts of discourses and even realities by emphasizing that they want to

share the Soviet memories and Islamic culture with Kyrgyz people.

At the end of the seminar, Prof. Gao Bingzhong from PKU's Department of Sociology, drew a conclusion. Unlike other continents in the world whose geographical concepts correspond with ethnic ones, Asia is in fact only a geographical concept with major divergence and diversity with respect to culture, religion, language and ethnicity. Therefore, the fieldwork achievements shared by today's experts present more global characteristics than Asian characteristics. Only when Asia is viewed from a global perspective can Asian studies be meaningful with regard to methodology. In today's presentations, many subjects in practice are actual individuals who explore the changes in this world and in this era within the geographical scope of Asia, which is rare and valuable in social science research. The difficulty, or enchantment, of anthropology is to push back the boundaries of the original domain where we started and come up with other new guidance. For example, today we started with an Asian approach to analyze questions, and then transcended the boundaries of Asia to discuss issues in this world and in this era.