This article tries to respond to the question whether there’s any epistemology that is geographically particular and could be free from the concentric and oppressive tendency of ideological system. Would the South-South epistemological challenge unbind the North hegemony? Could the knowledge from Asia or the third world, taking the Chinese tradition for example, propose a challenge that confronts the so-called “West,” and serve as an antidote to solve the questions posed by the history of imperialist-colonial expansion in various forms, from the 16th century down to the 21st century? Where are the “Souths” today? Is the “South” a cartographical designation that refers to the “South” of the globe on the map? But, the “South,” just like the “West” or the “East,” is defined through geo-political perspective. In whatever geographical area, be it the southern parts of the Pacific Rim or the southern provinces of China, or the southern parts in Taiwan, there is always a regime of center and periphery in terms of the political society and the power structure. To take the Asian or the “southern” epistemology as opposed to the West or the European or the “northern” ones exactly falls into the trap of area studies that
fixates a geographically delineated location, as possessing a unique, particular and even exceptional culture, neglecting the fact that the long historical processes have again and again testified the global flux and mixture of cultures and people throughout centuries in different societies.

The spatialization of knowledge, such as area studies, national literature or national history, as many thinkers have pointed out, is a misleading mode of thinking that assumes the centrality of space in the constitution of social orders. The rise of national literature and comparative literature in the nineteenth century in Europe, and the similar advent of area studies at the end of the second World War and at the beginning of the Cold War in the last century in US, have informed us the fact that the presumed comparability of cultural differences is often grounded on the logic of the same and the pre-given perspectival grid (Harootunian 2005; Harootunian 2010; Naoki 2010). Likewise, modernity defined from the European perspective tend to view the rest of the world as either backward or underdeveloped. Even the phases of “alternative” modernity has already confirmed the prior and original model established according to the histories of European societies. The post-colonial resistances in the third world through resorting to traditional culture, or a particular spot of time in history, functioned the same spatialization and reification of culture and even assumed the position as second imperialists in order to rule its own people, as Benedict Anderson has presented in his discussion of the nationalist modernity in the Third World in *Spectre of Comparisons: Nationalism, Southeast Asia and the World* (Anderson 1998). We can even term such kind of spatialization of knowledge as what Jon Solomon theorized as “apparatus of area” that produces race/species differences and demonstrates a “cartographies of domination
and exploitation” (Solomon 2015). Such mode of hyposatization and even fetishization of the place, be it Europe or Asia, the West or the East, is to ignore the simultaneously intertwining and interacting historical processes and the co-existence of different temporalities and power structures in the same place that co-constitute the local cultural and social orders.

In order not to reconstruct any kind of ethnic knowledge, the question of the “decentering” and the “epistemological challenges of a common world” still need to be asked so that we can think the possibility of a “new politics of knowledge.” Here, the “south” or the “north-south” should not be taken as a geographical position, but a center-periphery relative position in terms of power structure. The “new politics of knowledge,” I would like to further propose, does not come from outside, not from another culture or another place, but always from within the local discursive field, as the immanent reflexive critique and resistance in the face of the tendencies of concentration of power and compartmentalization of knowledge, effected through historical conventions and contemporary global-local political conditions, that constitute the local apparatus of domination and exclusion. Such apparatus, be it inherited from traditional normative conventions or borrowed from alien culture, is always materialized through domestic language, knowledge and institutions, coated with local vocabularies and familiar concepts, making the discursive engine function in the societies we live in.

To be more precise, to me, there is no “pure” local culture or uncontaminated tradition in any society. What is presented as pure and authentic would always be a case of ideological operation. Histories are always long processes of syncretism and acculturation. Whatever knowledge or concepts circulated from foreign cultures would
always need to be translated into domestic language so that the knowledge and concepts could be understood and accepted by local communities. In the process of translation through selecting, filtering and incorporation, many changes would take place through the syncretized phrases and concepts in order to adhere to the concurrent forms of power structure.

In the massive works of translation of the enlightenment knowledge in early modern China, for example, we observed the emergence of a particular discursive mode of political economy disguised with Confucian ethical phraseology. The enlightenment intellectuals translated and appropriated foreign concepts from another language to respond to the questions and demands of their time and their worldview. Certain concepts such as nation, people, citizen, patriotism, democracy, constitution and government were highly employed and invested. By using traditional Confucian phraseology, or newly coined Chinese words, and adapting or altering the Japanese translated texts that they consulted, these phrases were inscribed and overlaid with mixed references. Western ideologies, Japanese cultural politics and Chinese semiotic and political networks were merged in one figure. This process of translation is what I have theorized as “semiotic syncretism” that appropriated the knowledge from the West, decorated through traditional Confucian phraseology, while at the same time instituted the normative law of power over life according to the interest of the contemporary state. (Liu 2011; Liu 2015)

The reason that I take up the case of the revival of Confucianism in contemporary China is because, to me, such case epitomized the question of how the traditional local epistemology such as Confucianism or neo-Confucianism would incorporate and collaborate with contemporary ideologies as disparate as state nationalism and neoliberal
capitalism.  I need to clarify here right away that by addressing the question of Confucianism, I do not refer to the Confucian thinkers in different dynasties as a group. To me, each and every re-interpretation of the Confucian classics is an intellectual endeavor of hermeneutics and is bound to bear the historical imprints and mixed with various intellectual sources due to different political and contextual relevance. The annotations of the Confucian classics and even the explications of the same terminology such as ren (仁) or xin (心), would function as linguistic indexes or shifters, carry different subjective positions, address different audiences, engage different agendas, and vary either imperceptibly or drastically from one thinker to the other and from century to century. To follow the canon established by one particular period, for example, the Confucian scholars of the Han Dynasty (202 BC – 220 AD) whose major objectives were to formulate the doctrines for the service of the monarch would be to endorse the Confucian ruling ideology of the Heavenly Mandate and the hierarchical ethics, and to claim its orthodox position as Confucianism, is clearly an ideological practice for the sake of domination. Such ideology of domination, however, has been practiced and recurred constantly throughout the Chinese histories as well as in the modern era.

I will take up the intriguing question of the ostensibly irrelevant but relatively concurrent phenomena of the renaissance of Confucianism in China vis-a-vis the rise of Pax Sinica predicted to come and dominate the world order in the coming 21st century. It is apparent to me that the discourse of recent renaissance of Confucianism discloses a new politico-economic order that is in tune with the logic of the neo-liberalist capitalism of today. This revival of Confucianism has reminded us of the several waves of the revival of Confucianism professed by different ruling regimes since the beginning of the
Republic, including the Japanese colonial rule in Manchuria and Taiwan, Yuan Shikai’s rule in the imperial restoration period, Chiang Kaishek’s rule of the Nanking Government in 1930s and of Taiwan during the Martial Law period. The series of correlatives would lead us to think the question of the inherent potential of the autocratic ideology in Confucianism.

The Rise of Pax Sinica?

The rapid growth and expansion of China’s economic power within recent 20 years attracted wide-spread discourse concerning the rise of Pax Sinica: Would this new Pax Sinica replace the hegemony taken by Pax Americana that lasted since the middle of the 20th century? Would the US’s determination of rebalance towards the Asia-Pacific and play the leading role both in neoliberal free-trade and regional security create more tension in this region? Would the return of the pre-modern Pax Sinica in the 21th century offer a different model from the other greater forces that had seized the hegemonic power in history in the previous centuries? (Dosch 2007: 209-236; Goldman 2013; Kawato 2014; The Economist 2014; Heydarian 2015)

I do not intend to offer any prediction as to whether or how the Pax Sinica will dominate the world order in the 21st century. I would however examine the structure of a new form of collaborative colonialism in the post-1989 global scene through the discursive mode of Confucianism that is prevailing in the last two decades. The question behind this project is to examine the discourse of the reconstruction of Confucianism in which an imperial-colonial structure emerged and highlighted the uneven power structure concerning the political economy of today’s neo-liberalist capitalism.
Why is the stake an issue here? Why do we need to view the neoliberal economic collaborative practice a form of neo-colonialism in accordance to the previous capitalist empire, whether it is the *Pax Americana* in the twentieth century or the *Pax Sinica* of the 21st century? Does China really hold the trump card as the new hegemon to come? Or would it be merely a mirror imitation or a hidden partner of the *Pax Americana*?

Recent studies have observed that the new order China is gradually building up through the economic partnerships and multilateral organizations. There are newly emerged organizations including SCO (Shanghai Co-operation Organization) with six countries—China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, CICA (Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia), the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa), and AIIB (Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank). These newly formed organizations not only posed a challenge to the America-led world order, but also claimed not to repeat the 20th-century cold war confrontational model, not to form an “alliance”, like NATO, but a “partnership”, with no adversary in mind (*The Economist* 2014; Horner 1996/1997). But, China’s aggressive economic dispositions, including the extended oil pipes, railroads, canals and huge investments in foreign industries, have already been criticized as neo-colonialism and created quite a few anti-Chinese sentiments in different countries (MAG 2011/03). The naval drills performed in May 2015 respectively by Japan and Philippine in the South China Sea, and the China-Russia alliance in Mediterranean Sea, the endpoint of the passage to the greater economic zone through “One Belt, One Road” policy, demonstrated this newly formed battlefield of the struggles for the hegemony of economic blocs.
Along with this rapid rise of China’s economic power on the global stage and the liberalist strategy to expand its economic territory, the caution for the potential challenges and threats of China ensued and emphatically voiced by the China-bashers, as what James C. Hsiung had pointed out (Hsiung 2002: 99-115). The old fear for the Yellow Peril returned in a new form, a symptomatic Sino-phobia of the 21st century. To be more specific, this new form of Sino-phobia is the mixture of the communist-phobia during the Cold War Era of the twentieth century, and the ambivalence toward the new economic power that China is representing now. This ambivalence lies in the fear of being swallowed up by the Chinese economic empire as well as the desire to take part in the network and soar up with it. Despite the fact that they resent the threat brought by China, both US and its Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) and the members of EU are eager to join the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), the “International Development Bank” and a “Development Fund” offered by China for various regions. If you join the team established by China and show your allegiance, then you’ll be promised with trade preferences, including reducing tariffs, offering partial profits and providing aids for local developments. Domestic governments welcome this trade benefits and forms a collaborative entrepreneurial partnership in this apparatus of co-operation. This center-periphery economic attachment system speaks just the same logic as the one of the pre-modern Chinese tributary system (Yongjin Zhang 2001: 27, 43-63).

In defending the different world order of the Confucian paradigm to be introduced by the re-emergent China in the 21st century, James C. Hsiung stressed that China had dominated the world economy for at least one thousand years before the West’s rise after 1500, and never developed the colonial rule as the West did. The rapid revival of the
economic powers of East Asian countries proved that “those Asian societies that are the most heavily imbued with Confucian influence fared the best and recovered the fastest” (Hsiung 112). Hsiung also insisted that the China-led system, inspired by “Sinic virtues and values,” was characterized by formal hierarchy but informal equality, which is contrary to the formal equality and informal hierarchy practiced in the Western tradition (Hsiung 2002: 112; Hsiung 2012).

Hsiung’s address was exemplary and demonstrated the core question here. We are well aware of the fact that there could be informal hierarchy within the system of formal equality, but could there be informal equality within the system of formal hierarchy of unequal positions and uneven distributions? Was the economic power of the Pax Sinica that lasted more than one thousand years the one and same empire? Did the people of different ethnic groups and in different dynasties share the equality that Hsiung and other Confucian scholars professed to be? Moreover, it is clear that the Pax Sinica of the 21st century, if it is ever to take place, would never be the same pre-modern empire it once claimed to be, in whatever forms of whatever historical dynasties. China has gone through the transformations of modernization. The Enlightenment legacy of “enriching the country and strengthening the military” (富國強兵) was deep-rooted in the Chinese psychological infrastructures. Within the two decades after 1989, China has rapidly emerged as the super economic and financial power in the global world stage of neoliberalism, not to mention its potential military power, as demonstrated not only in the constant navy drills but also in the dispositions of the medium-range ballistic missiles along the south-east coasts.
It is exactly at this moment that the revival of Confucianism is all the more intriguing and the study of the inherent structure of the imperial-colonialism in this discourse is even more important.

**Renaissance of Confucianism in the 21st Century and the Inherent Discourse of Imperial-Colonialism**

Recent Renaissance of Confucianism in China, with massive projects of knowledge production, echoing James Hsiung’s rhetoric, demonstrated a new wave of discursive construction of a normative politico-economic order. This revival of Confucianism in China is a movement activated and proliferated from all sides in recent two decades, by the government, the academic circles and the general public. Besides the wide-spread renovation of traditional academies (*shuyuan* 書院) and new establishment of the school of Chinese Classics (*guoxue* 國學院) all over different provinces, there are also popular activities from local societies to encourage people to read classical texts (*dujing* 讀經), to participate the competition for the acquisition of classical Confucian knowledge, to promote traditional Han Chinese clothing (*hanfushe* 漢服社), and to observe traditional rites, especially the ceremonial rituals in Confucius Temples (*jikong* 祭孔). To top of all these activities are the massive publications of different versions of Confucian textbooks, curricula and studies written by scholars and by non-academic writers.

Jiang Qing (蔣慶) is one exemplary figure in this wave of Renaissance of Confucianism. He is the author of *An Introduction to Gongyang Zhuan, Political Confucianism, A Confucian Constitutional Order: How China’s Ancient Past can Shape Its Political Future*, and many others. Besides his critique of Mind Confucianism (*xinxing*
ruxue, 心性儒學), Jiang proposes to resort not only to the Five Classics (wujing五經), but particularly to the text of Gongyang Zhuan (公羊傳), focusing on the interpretation of “Grand Unification” (大一統) advocated by late Qin scholar Kang Youwei (康有為) (Jiang Qing 2012; Bell 2008; Fan 2011). He proposed to take Confucianism as national religion. He strongly rejected the political modernity introduced from the West, including the modern concepts of equality, democracy and the republican system. Jiang thinks that the political modernity influenced by the West over the past hundred years is full of flaws. He argued that the 20th century is now over and China should abandon all Western influence and move into the 21st century by embracing its own traditional Confucianism. Moreover, he thinks that it is the Heavenly Mandate that China has to return to the ancient, to revive conservatism, and to bring back classics as the foundation in order to rewrite national constitution.

Gan Yang (甘陽), from a different context, also advocated the political order of the Grand Unification (大一統) and the reconciliation between the past and present by “bridging the three traditions” (通三統) suggested by the Confucian classic Gongyang Zhuan advocated by Kang Youwei. To him, the unification of the traditions of Confucianism, Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping is the perfect solution to achieve the Grand Unification. Gan explained the meanings of the Grand Unification in four aspects. First, the Grand Unification suggests that China is the group of people who shared the same cultural traditions and customs through a long process of interactions in history and formed the same cultural identity and civilization. Second, the Grand Unification means that China is a unified political community, with single sovereignty, and rejects any form of political secessions. Third, the Grand Unification indicates the continuity of Chinese
history, each succeeding dynasty inherited and integrated the previous traditions into Chinese civilization, including the Mongolian Dynasty and the Manchuria Dynasty, and this is what is called “bridging the three traditions” (通三統). Finally, the Grand Unification provides a vision of borderless world (世界大同) for the future. (Gan 2007: 1-3)

It is basing on this rhetoric of the Mandate of Heaven and the operation of the Grand Unification in the Confucian political ethics that the typical model of the Chinese empires had developed. The power relation between center and periphery tributaries is clearly defined. Following the same logic of Confucian political order as elaborated by Jiang and Gan, Jiang Shigong (強世功) explains in his book China Hong Kong (《中國香港》) that Hong Kong naturally and necessarily should be a tributary of China, which means that the central government should take up the responsibility to take care of the security and stability of Hong Kong, and Hong Kong should follow the dictate of the central government and offer its tribute in the form of obedience. In this way, there is no chance for Hong Kong to establish autonomously its own legislature procedure for the governance of its own local affairs. (Jiang 2010: 228)

The discursive mode presented by Jiang Qing, Gan Yang, and Jiang Shigong testified the discursive and epistemic operations of Confucianism that provides a convenient framework that situates the dominant center and the subordinative periphery in a clearly defined hierarchical order. The tributary system practiced by the pre-modern Chinese empire is now further transformed into the economic and financial attachment system in the new world order. The central paradox of such normative discourse of Confucianism is that, while stressing the superiority of Confucian moral virtues and the
kingly way (wangdao 王道) of the Emperor who can lead the country to a harmonious and borderless world, military forces were oftentimes unavoidable. If the neighboring countries avowed their loyalty and obedience and pay tributes to the Imperial Court, they could be protected from the attacks of other countries. Otherwise, the Imperial Court would use its forces to conquer them if necessary. The position from the center, as defined by the Confucian ethics, would easily dismiss the subordinate periphery, be it the periphery regions, the lower-class people, the migrants, or the silent masses at large.

Throughout history, Chinese dynasties maintained their legitimacies by claiming the rightful inheritance of the Heavenly Mandate and their rules over surrounding nations through resorting to the triplet governmental structure composed with patriarchal clan system, imperial examination and its bureaucracy, as well as Confucian hierarchical ethics. But, in fact, the so-called homogeneous and continuous Chinese culture is fundamentally a problematic claim. Chinese people are in fact highly hybridized, and the concept of “Han people” is a myth constructed very recently in modern history. Chinese history is not at all a smooth continuation of the same culture and the same race, but a gradual re-composition of different tribes in the course of long historical processes, either through commerce, migrations or battles. In his recent book What Is China: Frontier, Ethnics, Culture and History (何為中國：疆域民族文化與歷史), Ge Zhaoguang (葛兆光) reviewed the discourse of the rise of China and pointed out that there are already many studies questioning the homogeneity and the unity of Chinese history, Chinese civilization and Chinese thoughts, objecting the argument of sinicization (漢化) by scholars such as Ping-ti Ho. Also, all political societies at the “periphery areas” have their
own histories that would be very different from the historical narrative by the Chinese empire. (Ge 2014: 20-21)

Moreover, to claim that the Chinese model of the empire would be the one based on Wangdao or benevolent rule by the Sage-king would be entirely erroneous. These dynastic changes were never peaceful, nor were the rule under each monarch always a peaceful one. According to different studies, there could be 300 to 400 insurrections in each dynasty formed by plebian people because of the oppressive rules with uneven distribution of lands, heavy taxations and ethnic hierarchical governance. Also, in each dynasty, the death toll caused by internal insurrections or by dynastic changes could reach up from 3 millions to 80 millions people. The massacres in the years during the Mongol conquest of the Song dynasty caused 20 millions’ people death.¹

Commenting on the hierarchical international order perceived by the Chinese world, Yongjin Zhang said, “China, the superior moral power, was responsible for maintaining and harmonizing this order with the moral examples it set, with institutional innovations and with force if necessary.” Inner and Central Asian nomadic and barbarian tribes, for example, participated in these Chinese international system mostly through war and conquest. Acute contradictions could be observed between the normative claims about the Chinese moral and cultural superiority and the actual behavior of Chinese rulers in dealing with other members within the Chinese world order. (Zhang 53-54)

Structure of the New Colonialism in the Non-Colonial Era

The revival of Confucianism does not occur merely in contemporary China. It returned several times in the twentieth century, and it is clear that each time the revival of
Confucianism indicated an ideological effort of the ruling authority to reinforce its political control over the state by claiming its legitimacy and the Heavenly Mandate. From the restoration of the monarchy in 1914 by Yuan Shikai (袁世凱) who proclaimed himself the Emperor of the Chinese Empire of the Republic era, the warlords who occupied different provinces during the period of the Northern Government (Beiyang Government 北洋政府) during 1912-1928, the total militarization in the New Life Movement launched in 1934 by Chiang Kai-shek (蔣介石) of the Nanjing Government, the Japanese colonial rules in the Manchuria government and in Taiwan, and the Chinese Cultural Renaissance in the 1960s by KMT Government in Taiwan during the martial law period, all these occasions have attested the political function Confucianism held for the centralization and militarization of the ruling government to rationalize its legitimacy and its concentration of power. The publication of *xiaojing*, *The Book of Filial Piety* (孝經), together with the propaganda of the Kominka Movement as *Huangmin fenggong jing fu xiaojing* (皇民奉公經附孝經) by the Japanese colonial government in Taiwan, encouraging the *subject of the emperor* to serve in the battlefield, as fulfilling his duty of filial piety to the state, further exemplified how the concept of loyalty and filial piety could be merged in the disciplinary governance of the subjects of the modern state.

What is the structure of imperial-colonial structure we are facing today? Why is the discourse of Confucianism collateral to the imperial imaginary of the transnational cooperative networks of regional economic zones? The hierarchical order envisioned by the discourse of Confucianism would only justify the inequality and the subordination structured by the center-periphery attachment relation. As long as the local society could
not exercise full sovereignty over its own public affairs, external forces will dictate it and aggravate the local unequal distributions.

Our current global situation is very close to what Nishikawa Nagao analyzed as the “new colonialism” (Nishikawa 2012). According to Nishikawa, contemporary form of new colonialism rule not through taking the land, but through international cooperative organizations. In the post-Cold War era, the global flow of capital mobilized the labor force from one place to other places and created drastic poverty gap in different societies and different countries. The attachment of the state at the periphery to the state at the center explained the global exploitation structure. The concentration of capital and power in the global cities attracted huge amount of transnational entrepreneurs as well as global migrant workers and contrived new forms of colony in today’s societies. This form of new colonialism has no colony, but penetrates into different societies through transnational entrepreneurial organizations, enjoying exterritorial privileges, and breeding extreme poverty in local communities.

Nishikawa’s notion of the new colonialism is not at all a new one. The operative logic of contemporary dispositions of super-economic blocs is the continuation of the global super powers from the imperial expansion to the Cold War era, but in different forms. Early in the 1960s, Kwame Nkrumah analyzed in his Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism the retreating of the old-fashioned colonialism with the rise of neo-colonialism to take its place that he witnessed in the two competing economic forces between US and USSR. According to him, the essence of neo-colonialism is that, even though freed from the colonial rule as an independent State, the State is still trapped by international sovereignty, and its economic system and political policy is “directed from
outside.” (Nkrumah 1965) For him, the non-alignment and the Organization of African Unity would be the solution to resist this neo-colonialism imposed by the super-economic imperial powers. Regardless of the success or failure of OAU, the neo-colonial State depicted by Nkrumah is exactly the condition Taiwan and many other similar countries were situated during the Cold War period and are still facing in the post-Cold War era, though in different modes.

The Chinese Cultural Renaissance in the 1967 by the ROC government in Taiwan, with the recourse to Confucian moral values, is actually a repetition of the New Life Movement Chiang Kai-shek launched in 1934, presaging the Moral Re-Armament Movement (MRA) advocated in 1938 by Frank Buchman, with whom Chiang Kai-shek corresponded for the MRA movement. In Taiwan, the United State Information Center with its the widely read publications, YMCA and the evangelical educations for teenagers through various camps, the Pearl S. Buck Foundation which kept a record of more than 630 Amerasian mixed-blood children in Taiwan, all these institutes indicated the impact of US on Taiwan on different fronts.³

We need to note that the rhetoric of reviving Confucianism in the Chinese Cultural Renaissance in 1967 by the ROC government in Taiwan was a reaction against the Cultural Revolution starting from 1966 by PRC in which Confucius as well as all traditional values were denounced and even destroyed. Contemporary Renaissance of Confucianism in China represents a different form of reaction and denial against the history of the Cultural Revolution in the 1960s. The central role of Confucianism in the justification of the legitimacy of the rule and the practice of authoritarian domination in Chinese societies came to the front in our discussion here.
The question is: why is Confucianism so easily appropriated in the imperial-colonial discourse, not only in the Warlord period in early republic of China, or in the Japanese colonial rule in Manchuria and Taiwan, in the dictatorship regime during the Martial Law period in Taiwan, but also in the age of the neoliberal capitalism? The post-1989 or the post-Cold War era, as what we have seen so far, does not presents the end of the two competing blocs. Instead, what surfaced are competition for the domination of the capitalist market in the global world order, while at the same time the displaced forms of border politics and Cold War dichotomy still function locally, bringing up old frictions in various substituted forms. How do we confront such hierarchical epistemology in neoliberal Confucian capitalism, backing up by James Hsiung and other intellectuals in China, through any politics of knowledge?

The Limits of Confucianism and the Critique from Within

I would like to call our reader’s attention to the fact that, though the political movement of Criticize Lin & Criticize Confucius (pilin pikong 批林批孔) and Polemics between Confucianism and Legalism (Rufa Douzheng 儒法鬥爭) during the Cultural Revolution in the 1970s was used as a power struggle by the Gang of Four against Lin Biao and Zhou Enlai and appeared as a perverse version of philosophical debates, this movement nevertheless could serve as an index that pointed to a significant genealogy of the intellectual politics fighting for equality against the authoritarian domination and centralized power and in different dynasties of Chinese history. During 1973 to 1974, large amount of writings and publications were produced concerning Legalism (fa jia 法家). From the long list of cases, we can easily see that these thinkers are the early...
socialists who proposed socialist visions and equalitarian policies in different historical and social conditions. Shang Yang (商鞅) of the 4th century BC, for example, insisted on the rule by law and the equality of everyone under law (一刑無等級). Wang Mang (王莽), another excellent example in the 1st century BC, banned the slavery system and instituted the system of ownership of farmland according to the field-well-system (井田制), that is, if a family had less than eight members but had one well or larger property, it was required to distribute the excess to fellow clan members, neighbors or other members of the same village (男不盈八，田不得過一井). Liu Zongyuan (柳宗元), a member of the Yongzhen reformist movement (永貞革新) in the 9th century that moved to reduce heavy taxation and to stop privatization of military powers, criticized the discourse of Heavenly Mandate (天說) and promoted the self-governance of local government (郡縣論). Wang Anshi (王安石), a socioeconomic reformer in the 11th century, opposed the concentration of land and broke up private monopolies and introduced some forms of government regulation and social welfare.

These challenges posed against their contemporary monarchial rule represented a path of internal critiques and revolutionary re-institutions in Chinese history. Such confrontation from within the culture, I think, present a necessary politics of knowledge that could refute and unbind from the logic of the existing domineering epistemology.

The political moments of immanent critiques exercised in Chinese history illustrated various projects of reforms or re-institution of new policies by challenging the contemporary authoritarian governance in the particular historical contexts. The law of equality is their common agenda, with the purpose to intervene and to emancipate, in
continual dialectical processes, so as to delink from the bondage set up by the gradual concentration and privatization of land and powers in the hierarchical political system of China.

Though on the surface the event of pinfapiru was a perverse version of the polemics of the school of Legalists (法家) against the school of Confucianism, and the power struggle between the gang-of-four against Zhou Enlai, this event nevertheless served as an index and pointed to a history of the intellectual revolutions and critique against the rigid domination of the centralized political order on the basis of the plea for equality in different historical moments. These early socialist thinkers exposed exactly at the limit of Confucianism, a critique from within, and an intellectual effort for unbind from the dominant hierarchical ideology. The revival of Confucianism in China today, however, is largely a reaction against the pinfapiru movement and a refusal of the socialist revolution for equality at large.

To understand the paradox in the normative reconstruction of recent revival of Confucianism and to trace the counter-discourse of the critique against Confucianism in history, or the history of bianfa (變法 literally changing the law), political reforms against the authoritarian concentration of power, would offer us a different perspective in Chinese intellectual history. Such internal political critique was activated basing on the idea of equality against the dominant ruling regime. These local institutional revolutions, materialized through various forms in history, to me, are the crucial forces to delink the enchantment of the colonial apparatus exercised through the imperial expansions in history, and also through transnational entrepreneurial cooperative organizations in today’s apparatus of global political economy.
A few concluding remarks for my paper here:

First, there is no emancipatory epistemology that can be borrowed from another culture or another cartographically defined place except practiced from within, through internal critique, against the material conditions of the particular historical and political contexts. Whether the domineering ideology is coming from colonial rule or from local government, the discursive syncretism through the process of cultural arbitrage would activates a process of exchange and incorporated and re-instituted in the contemporary domestic society through local practices and domestic institutions. Ancient Confucianism would then disguise itself in the service the concentration and hierarchy of power, and therefore the critique would always need to be from within the culture and within the society.

Second, the discourse of the Grand Unification and Grand Integration in the Renaissance of Confucianism in China echoed in part the vision of the rise of Pax Sinica to replace Pax Americana and to seize the power position of the coming economic hegemony. Confucian political ethics that served to stabilize the hierarchical subordination system could easily justify the rationale of the center-periphery structure of the imperial-colonialism in the attachment system of contemporary regional economic blocs. Contemporary form of imperial-colonialism in fact does not need to occupy land or sea by force. It can be achieved through the expansion of its transnational entrepreneurial networks, supported by the neo-liberalist strategy of the free market competition and the maneuver of financial territories through local governments’ eager supports. The traditional Confucian political ethics and its rhetoric of benevolence have provided a convenient imaginary grid that superimposes over the economic subordination system.
framed up by the transnational cooperative networks. The collaborations of the
government at the peripheral positions with the government at the center of the economic
empire would make it an easy pass for the local governments to dismiss and exploit local
people’s equal right to their living resources. The discourse of surrendering partial profit
and aiding the development in the name of Confucian benevolence would make it all the
more irresistible for the local government and local people in the face of all the
investments and developmental plans.

Third, we need to remember that contemporary revival of Confucianism is a reaction
against the campaign to destroy the Confucian tradition in the Cultural Revolution,
especially the pilinpikong movement in the 1970s. But, this recurring discourse of
Confucianism also demonstrates the links with the several efforts of restoration of
conservative political power in the twentieth century that emphasized the rule of
militarized total control in the name of the Renaissance of Chinese Confucian Culture.
Unless we look into the historical background and its political tensions behind the history
of ideas, whether it honored or criticized Confucianism, we would not be able to
comprehend the political stakes in these intellectual debates and the operative mechanism
of the normative knowledge production. In other words, the history of ideas is never just
a history of “ideas” without context, but a history of multidimensional contradictions,
with complex hidden political agendas.

Fourth, in the criticisms against the Confucian scholars during the pilinpikong and
rufadouzheng movement, what we see are not the differences in different schools of
thoughts, but the efforts to excavate the instances in different historical moment, with its
particular social conditions, of re-instituting and re-formulating the policies regarding the
distributions of lands and properties, in order to resist against the inherited or expanded privatization of lands and properties. These are different perspectives in history that contradicted the dominant hierarchy of Confucianism. The privatization of the resources through the concentration of power displays the statist control of the political order, while the resistance against this overarching hierarchical order demonstrates the acknowledgement of and the respect for the co-existence of the under-privileged ones within the same community. It is through the early socialists’ intellectual revolutions in different moments of Chinese history that we see the practice of the logic of equality.
Works Cited


Jiang Qing 蔣慶 Collections online:


Jiang, Shigong. 強世功 (2010) *China Hong Kong: Political and Cultural Perspectives* 中國香港：政治與文化的視野 Beijing: Sanlian Publisher.


MAG. 2011/03 “The Hegemon of China Invading Africa Criticized as New Colonialism”.


Nkrumah, Kwame. Neo-Colonialism, the Last Stage of imperialism. 1965.


r-starting-asia-pax-sinica.

According to Jian Bozan, for example, there were more than 60 insurrections during 5th to 6th centuries in South and North Dynasties, 150 insurrections around 12th to 13th centuries in Southern Song Dynasty, more than 400 insurrections in the southern areas around 13th to 14th centuries in Yuan Dynasty, 400 insurrections around 14th to 17th centuries in Ming Dynasty, and around 300 to 400 insurrections in Qing Dynasty before mid-nineteenth century. See Jian Bozan’s study in 1950 “On Chinese Farmers’ Wars in Ancient Times.” (Jian 1951)

During his autocratic rule as the first president of the Republic of China, besides establishing Western school system, he also stressed to practice the ritual in Confucius Temples and to institute Confucianism in school education. Likewise, all the warlords in the period of Northern Government also advocate Confucianism.

The shifting of the US’s recognition from ROC to PRC in the 1970s, and the cancellation of ROC’s status as membership of UN, however, testified the opportunist position taken by US and the arbitrariness of the juridical political status defined by international law.