

## Zitierhinweis

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## BOOK REVIEWS

**Review article:** LIN Zhichun (aka. Ri-Zhi): *Collected Works of Ri-Zhi*: 5 Vols. Pp. 2523. Ed. by ZHANG Qiang and LIU Jun. Beijing: Higher Education Press, 2012. ISBN: 978-7-04-033193-6(hdb).

The *Collected Works of Ri-Zhi (CWR)* was presented in a ceremony held in Beijing on July 22, 2012. The publication of *CWR* by Higher Education Press represents the monumental task of compiling the works of Ri-Zhi (pseudonym of Prof. Lin, Zhichun), thus highlighting the main academic achievements of Prof. Lin.

Prof. Lin was a prominent scholar and professor of History, generally regarded as the forerunner and promoter of the studies in the fields of Ancient World History and Ancient Civilizations in China. He was born in 1910 and since his childhood he eagerly read the classical works of Chinese literature which were available at home. In 1943, he earned his Diploma in History from Great China University (currently East China Normal University, ECNU), where he began to work as a lecturer at the History Department in 1947. In 1950, he accepted a job offer from Northeast Normal University (NENU) and moved from Shanghai to Changchun where he hoped to have more opportunities to learn from Russia (the former Soviet Union). In his early years, he specialized in Chinese history, especially pre-Qin history and Qin-Han history and, in fact, during the 1950s, in the debates on the division of the historical periods of ancient China, he became one of the leading exponents of the doctrine of “Feudalism Beginning from Wei and Jin Dynasties”. But soon after he took the job at NENU, with the establishment of World History as a science in China, he began to teach and to do research in the field of Ancient World History, on account of his command of foreign languages.<sup>1</sup> From then on, his research fields were gradually broadening from Ancient Chinese History to Ancient World History in general.

In the process of introducing and developing the field of Ancient World History in China in the 1950s and 1960s, Prof. Lin became a pioneer and mentor who devoted himself entirely to his career and also achieved outstanding accomplishments. First of all, he managed to introduce original materials and up-to-date research from Western countries, not only by buying a great number of books from abroad and constructing a professional library available for teachers and researchers in the field of the Ancient world, but also by translating many foreign materials into Chinese, with the help of

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<sup>1</sup> While he worked at the Great China University in Shanghai, he took advantage of the favorable factors for studying foreign languages by attending some lectures in order to improve his English as well as to learn Russian and Latin.

his more advanced students. Secondly, he undertook the training of professionals in Ancient World History with the help of foreign experts, and consequently the first group of instructors and later researchers in the field of Ancient World History appeared in China in the 1950s. Thirdly but not the least, Prof. Lin himself worked hard to acquire the necessary expertise and was engaged in the study of Ancient Civilizations, producing many valuable treatises embodying his learning style of paying equal attention to both theoretical thinking and analysis of historical materials. All these have established the foundation for his later research and for the formation of his thoughts on developing the science of Ancient World History in China.<sup>1</sup>

During the Cultural Revolution, Prof. Lin persevered with his research and teaching activities privately. With his continually increasing knowledge and materials, at the end of the 1970s Prof. Lin completed the book, *A Concise History of Ancient World*, which is the first Chinese monograph on the general history of the ancient world. He applied Marxism to his studies and put forward his theory “From City-state to Empire” for the development of the ancient world. Prof. Lin interpreted Ancient Chinese history following this theory after a re-examination of the classical civilization of China, and then formed his characteristic study of “Sino-Occidental Classical Civilizations”. In the 1980s, he began to advocate establishing the international system of teaching and research for the ancient civilizations by subdividing the science into Egyptology, Assyriology, Hittite Studies and Classics. Consequently, in 1984 the Institute for the History of Ancient Civilizations (IHAC) was founded at NENU and became the unique organization in China specializing in the teaching and study of Ancient World History. Today most of the instructors and researchers in Ancient World History at the universities and colleges in China were trained at IHAC or graduated from there. In 1986, Prof. Lin founded the *Journal of Ancient Civilizations (JAC)*, published by IHAC in order to improve communication with foreign scholars. Even in his nineties Prof. Lin developed more deeply his ideas on the “Sino-Occidental Classical Civilizations” and proposed some significant arguments.

In retrospect, during his lifetime of almost 100 years, Prof. Lin has produced a mass of works including monographs, treatises, textbooks, contemporary comments, book reviews and dictionary entries, on topics concerning Ancient World History, history of Western historiography, ancient Chinese history, history of Chinese scholarship and historiography, as well as some other sciences. These works not only comprise valuable materials for the study of Ancient World History and modern Chinese historiography, but also embody both the development of Prof. Lin’s thoughts and the

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<sup>1</sup> Based on his efforts, the textbooks and sourcebooks for Ancient World History were compiled, among which *History of the Ancient World* was published by Higher Education Press in 1958. Moreover, *Newsletter on the Ancient History of World* was edited for the purpose of introducing the up-to-date archaeological discoveries and research results of the Western countries.

progress of the science of Ancient World History in China.

The *CWR* comprehensively presents these achievements of Prof. Lin by collecting and editing his main works. Prof. Zhang Qiang from NENU took charge of the project for compiling the works of Prof. Lin. The editors began the task of collecting these works in 2007, and finally completed the job with the publication of *CWR* in 5 volumes.

In Volume 1 (Excursion in Ancient History), the editors have compiled Prof. Lin's treatises from 1934 to 2000, which had been published but had never been compiled into any collections. Among these 55 treatises, there are ten that were published before the foundation of the People's Republic of China in 1949. Half of these ten are discourses about several topics in the study of Chinese History and we can find the thorough research on the ancient history of China which Prof. Lin had made during his study and instruction at Shanghai. Nevertheless, he was not only a scholar who just kept pursuing academic studies, but he also showed much consideration for current affairs. The other five treatises are contemporary comments on the cultural and political situations at that time, which indicated Prof. Lin's profound awareness and openness as a progressive figure. In two of them, he set forth his own opinion on traditional Chinese culture and suggested how to develop Chinese culture. He argued that neither total repudiation nor overall adoption should be taken towards traditional culture, and that modernization was irresistible. In the other three essays<sup>1</sup>, he paid attention to the social and political problems in China at that time, especially on the importance of the peasant problem, and pointed out the future of Kuomintang according to the analysis of ancient Chinese dynasties.

The remaining 45 treatises were all written after the 1950s and concentrated mainly on the study of Ancient World History. As Prof. Liu Jiahe has demonstrated in the preface of *CWR*, these treatises can be classified into three groups according to the chronological progress of Prof. Lin's research. The first group consists of 19 articles composed in the 1950s, when he was trying to learn from Russia and was inevitably influenced by Russian academic ideas. Most of them are the fruits of Prof. Lin's researches, achieved after he had just begun to undertake the study of Ancient World History. In these works, he paid close attention to the advanced study of Western countries, and then introduced them to the academic circles in China. Although he was mainly interested in Russia among other Western countries, nevertheless Prof. Lin had never omitted the study of other countries nor did he neglect their original works.<sup>2</sup> During his continuous study he observed some issues and attempted to undertake

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<sup>1</sup> He wrote in English two of them, which demonstrates that he was trying to show the situation of China to the world.

<sup>2</sup> E.g., the article "*Ancient Society* of Morgan and some problems in the history of Primitive Society" focuses on Morgan's *Ancient Society* and argues about the division of the periods of primitive society, the system of consanguinity and family, the origin and development of family and clan.

deep research into them.<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile, with his serious attitude towards academic study, he participated in the debates on the division of historical periods of ancient China and published several significant discourses to clarify his stand.<sup>2</sup>

The second group consists of works from the 1960s to the beginning of the 1980s, when Prof. Lin made a deep study of the original works of Marxism, and with introspection on Russian historiography he succeeded in breaking away from its negative effect and doing research on Ancient World History independently. These treatises work in concert with Prof. Lin's other important achievement, *A Concise History of the Ancient World* (Vol. 2), which is discussed below. There are several articles in which he made great improvements in the continual study of primitive society and the Asian mode of production on the basis of the original works of Marxism. Prof. Lin also tried to develop the special study of Western civilizations with the updated materials and produced some significant arguments on ancient Assyria and Greece.<sup>3</sup> From these, his theory of "From City-state to Empire" was initially formed. In addition, by virtue of the experience he had gained during his teaching practice, Prof. Lin wrote to set forth his own opinion in the teaching of Ancient World History.

The third group of treatises in Volume 1 of the *CWR* consists of works which were written by Prof. Lin after the mid-1980s. Since then, on the basis of his study in both Ancient World History and ancient Chinese history, he began to focus on the comparison and study of "Sino-Occidental Classical Civilizations".<sup>4</sup> His study included many significant problems on which he put forward his own comments and opinions, and even opened the new field of Ancient World History for his successors. Simultaneously, Prof. Lin published two special essays to suggest his plan in the teaching and research of Ancient Civilizations by establishing the fields of Egyptology, Assyriology, Hittite Studies and Classics in China. With his unremitting efforts, these branches of Ancient World History were finally established in a newly created department and kept their developments successfully.

Volume 2 of the *CWR* consists of a monograph of Prof. Lin which has been published previously. *A Concise History of the Ancient World* was originally published in 1979 and became the representative work of Prof. Lin. This was the first

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<sup>1</sup> On the Asian mode of production, Prof. Lin had composed two articles to discuss with the famous historian, Tong Shuye.

<sup>2</sup> His polemic had reverberated in the academic circles at that time, and his discourses became representative works on behalf of "Feudalism Beginning from Wei and Jin Dynasties". Guo Moruo and Fan Wenlan, two famous historians in Chinese history, individually wrote back on this topic.

<sup>3</sup> Especially the treatises on *Gilgamesh and Aga* and military democracy in ancient Sumer, Homer and his epics, the date of the formation of the Athenian state, Linear B etc.

<sup>4</sup> These works are related to two monographs, *A History of Chinese and Western Classical Democracy from 1200 B.C. to 200 B.C.* and *A Study on Sino-Occidental Classical Civilizations*, which comprise Volumes 3 and 4 of the *CWR* and are discussed below.

achievement that Chinese scholars had attained in Ancient World History after they began to break away from Soviet theories and to read and use the original works of Marxism independently. Lin made full use of the updated archaeological materials he had collected during the Cultural Revolution, and based on abundant documents, he elucidated the main threads in the history of the ancient world quite clearly and set forth his theory “from City-state to Empire”. Moreover, he paid much attention to specific topics in the research of Ancient World History and gave detailed discussions concerning those significant theoretical issues such as, “labor creates human beings”, “three stages for primitive society”, “agricultural revolution and the emergence of civilization”, “the relations among the classes and their conflicts in early slave society”, “the character of the ownership system and their internal relations in early slave society”, “slave city-states and slave Empires” and “the way of the origin of state”. Moreover, Prof. Lin examined the “Asian mode of production” in accordance with the original works of Marx and Engels, and clarified the spirit of the “Asian mode of production” in those arguments, which had a profound influence in academia.

The two monographs comprising Volumes 3 and 4 both concentrate on the study of “Sino-Occidental Classical Civilizations”. In *A History of Chinese and Western Classical Democracy from 1200 B.C. to 200 B.C.* (Vol. 3), which was originally published in 1997, Prof. Lin expounds the study of “Sino-Occidental Classical Civilizations” by way of the analysis of the actual historical progress. He explores numerous documents in ancient Chinese and Western civilizations, and makes a thorough inquiry into the origin and the development of the classical democracy in ancient Chinese and Western city-states. Consequently, he demonstrates that both the ancient Chinese and the ancient Western states had generally experienced the period of city-state, and that democracy once existed commonly.

*A Study on Sino-Occidental Classical Civilizations* (Vol. 4) is a collection originally published in 1999 and includes 28 treatises from 1978 to 1996 based on a personal selection made by Prof. Lin himself. Different from the aforementioned volume, this collection compiles works focusing on different specific cases in ancient Chinese and Western states.

Some important unpublished works of Prof. Lin were compiled into Vol. 5 (Unpublished Works). First of all, *The Origin of Western Historiography and Several Problems of the Slavery States* which are both based on Prof. Lin’s lectures at the History Department of Xiamen University in 1963. The former work text discusses the origin of the historiography of ancient Egypt and Greece analyzing the origin and textual research of their characters, as well as the chronology of these ancient civilizations. The latter mainly concentrates on the origin of the state in Athens and Sumer, and the nature of Egyptian society from the Ptolemies to the Byzantines.

Another work in Volume 5 is *A Concise History of Historiography in the Ancient*

*World*, which was written by Prof. Lin before the Cultural Revolution and is undoubtedly the first work about the history of Western historiography composed in the early People's Republic of China. This work gives a systematic introduction to the emergence of historiography in the ancient world, including the scholarship of the ancient civilizations.<sup>1</sup>

Two further unpublished works deal with origins: *Origin of State in Ancient Egypt*<sup>2</sup> offers an argument based on several archaeological materials in order to expound the origin of the ancient state. In *Several Problems in the History of Ancient World*, Prof. Lin focused his discourses on the beginning of human society, the origin of classes and state, the Empire and City-state, and the decline of the slavery.

Lastly but importantly, in the three works on *Annals of Kingdoms*, which deal with Chinese history from 770 B.C. to 249 B.C., Prof. Lin demonstrated that in that period China had experienced the development and decline of the city-states.

In these unpublished works, we can observe the emergence of his specialization idea in the establishment of the science and study of the history of Ancient Civilizations, and we can confirm that he himself had begun to do the actual explorations in this science, right from its earliest times.

Having collected most of the important works of Prof. Lin, *CWR* has two main distinctions. On one hand, it includes some rare works, both those published before 1949 and those unpublished. We are therefore greatly indebted to the editors of *CWR* for preserving these works which can hardly be found now. On the other hand, the value of *CWR* becomes greater since the editors have performed the very detailed task of collating and synthesizing the materials so as to provide the original intentions of the original works. Concerning the published works, the editors not only corrected the errors in typography but also tried to emend them with the original manuscripts. If without manuscripts, they would revise them according to the annotations that Prof. Lin himself had made in the published books. The unpublished works have been compiled on the basis of the original handwriting drafts. Moreover, as regards the various kinds of quotations, the editors have verified them thoroughly by looking up the related works in the same editions which Prof. Lin had used.

As regards non-textual aspects, although the illustrations, plates and charts found in the original works have been improved during the editing, some of the illustrations have unfortunately been omitted from this collection.

In this rich collection, there are still several works with Prof. Lin as chief editor which have not been included, for example, *the History of the Ancient City-States*.

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<sup>1</sup> The more valuable points lie in the comparisons Prof. Lin made in the historiographies of the Chinese and the other ancient civilizations, which then shows some common pattern during the development of ancient historiography.

<sup>2</sup> A paper Prof. Lin submitted to the annual conference held by the Jilin Historical Association in 1965.

The prefaces of these works composed by Prof. Lin possess huge merits since we can find his actual academic thoughts in them.<sup>1</sup> In addition, Prof. Lin has edited some ancient classics of both Chinese and Western with the original languages (ancient Latin<sup>2</sup> or Chinese) on the left leaves and the translations (modern Chinese or English) on the right. These are cogent proof that he had made equal attempts to introduce Chinese classics to the world, while he was trying to introduce the Western classics to China, in order to promote the cultural exchange between China and the World. However, these works were missing in this collection. Nevertheless, the CWR has included most of the works of Prof. Lin and will doubtless help preserve these valuable materials as well as promote the research of contemporary historiography in China.

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<sup>1</sup> Fortunately, the preface of *History of the Ancient City-States* is included in Vol. 1.

<sup>2</sup> In his project, the Western classics comprise at least the ancient Greek and Latin works, but only two volumes (Livy's *Ab Urbe Condita*, book 1 and Nepos' *Liber De Excellentibus Ducibus Exterarum Gentium*) have been published with Latin-Chinese version when Prof. Lin was alive. In recent years, Prof. Zhang Qiang has resumed this project by publishing some Greek and Latin works with Chinese translations as parts of the Ri-Zhi Classical Library.