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Crossing Borders
Edipus in Asia and the Resistance to Psychoanalysis

Geoffrey Blowers

WHEN, in a letter to Nature in 1923 headed “Psychoanalysis and Anthropology”, Bronislaw Malinowski reported on the "original constitution" of the family structure as he had observed it "amongst present day savages" of the Trobriand Islands, he sought to revise rather than to refute psychoanalytic concepts in the light of his ethnographic evidence. He argued that in the patriarchal kinship system of the Trobrianders, the fierce and "tyrannical" father of Totem and Taboo was missing. The central tenets of a "repressive authority" and a "severing taboo" worked elsewhere "in a manner different from that of the patriarchal family" so that, if the general theory of Freud were correct, "the repressed wish formation ought to receive a shape different from the Edipus Complex." (1)

In several subsequent papers published a year later, Malinowski developed these ideas by drawing upon his observations of the development of male Trobriander children. Without a prohibiting father, according to him, a child's sexuality proceeded along with its social development, with the "craavings for its mother" expiring in "a natural spontaneous manner" but its genital sexuality generally was never "dislodged". The later intervention of the mother's brother to enforce the taboo of physical contact with the boy's sister holds in check his homicidal and incestuous wishes for her, this being, for Malinowski, evidence of a different nuclear complex. By drawing into sharper relief the relationship between biological and social development in different kinds of family structure, this led him to assert that adherents of orthodox psychoanalysis, rather than assuming the universality of the Edipus complex, should study "every type of civilisation, to establish the special complex that pertains to it". (2)


1923年，布鲁尼斯劳·马里诺斯基在《大自然》杂志上发表了一退为题为“精神分析学与人类学”的文章，报告了他曾经在特罗布里恩群岛的“今世野蛮人中”观察到的家庭结构的“原始组成”，希望通过对另外种族的种族数据来修正一些精神分析学的假设，而非破坏它们。他指出，在特罗布里恩群岛的母系家族结构中，《图腾与禁忌》中没有凶猛残暴的父亲形象。“抑制性权威”和“抑制禁忌”的一些核心原则以“一种不同于父系家庭的方式”在别处地方起作用；因此，如果弗洛伊德的总体理论是正确的，压制欲望的形成就应该接受一种不同于俄狄浦斯情结的外显。（3）

在一年后发表的文章里，马里诺斯基声称他通过对特罗布里恩群岛的男孩子的成长过程的观察，发展了这些观点。按照他的说法，如果没有一个控制性的父亲，一个孩子的性随着他的社会成长而成长。“对母亲的欲望”以“一种自然自发的形式”而终止，但是他的生殖器的性通常从未“消除”。后来来自哥哥的干预，加强了这个男孩与姐妹性接触的禁忌，约束了他对姐妹的杀气和乱伦性的欲望——对马里诺斯基来说，这是一种不同的核心情结的证据。通过进一步对比不同种类家庭结构中生理发展与社会发展之间的关系，他指出：正统精神分析学的拥护者不应该假设彼氏斯情结的普遍性，而应该“研究每种文明，从而建立符合各种文明的特殊情结”（4）。

弗洛伊德学派的权威代表欧内斯特·琼斯很快就对这种修正正统观点的做法作出了回应。1924年，英国皇家人类学会马里诺斯基的做法展开了激烈的讨论，于是该学会在那一年邀请琼斯做了一次讲座。（5）琼斯提出，马里诺斯基所观察到的野蛮人对其父母的忽视显示出了他自我的态度，其结果就是将某种可能带来不快后果的关系中的情感转移及“放置到某一个更安全的距离”。十四年之后，弗洛伊德再次想起了这件事——当时，病病而客居伦敦的他收到了马里诺斯基写给安娜的一封信，马里诺斯基在信中将自己称为“弗洛伊德及其工作的忠实仰慕者”，对此弗洛伊德表现出一种惊讶，因为他一直留意马里诺斯基对“其观点的反对与否定”（6）。

2. 引自“Psychoanalysis and Anthropology”，Pynne, 4, 1924年，第239-336页。
3. 当欧洲兴起一种新的整理，指的是Mother Right and the annual ignorance of savages, 载于Psycho-myth, Psychotherapy—Essays in Applied Psychoanalysis, 第2卷，1957年，第145-173页。
4. 引自琼斯著作George W. Stocking, 第13页。
Ernest Jones, representing the Freudian establishment, was quick to respond to this attempted revision of orthodoxy. Malinowski’s work was hotly debated in the Royal Anthropological Society in 1924, and Jones had been invited to deliver a lecture before it that year. Jones assumed that Malinowski’s observations of savages’ ignorance of their paternity indicated denial on their part, the effect of which was to shift the “affect in a relationship where it might have unpleasant consequences and depositing it at a safer distance.” Freud was reminded of this fourteen years later when, frail and ill and in exile in London, he received a letter from Malinowski addressed to Anna describing himself as a “devoted admirer of [Freud] and his work” to which Freud expressed pleasant surprise as he had been more aware of his “opposition and contradiction to [his] views.”

Jones’s reinstatement of the foundational role of the Oedipus complex, however, was already at odds with others in the movement, notably Otto Rank, whom Malinowski had cited. As editor of Image, he had republished both Malinowski’s and Jones’s articles. Rank, in The Trauma of Birth, raised the radical idea that all paternal conflicts with the father, including Oedipal ones, were but a chimera to more “essential ones concerning birth.” His placing the mother at the centre of the child’s first dealings with the world brought to the fore the important role she played in nurturing, and prioritised it over the potentially castrating role of the father. Freud initially accepted Rank’s work as a contribution, but did not feel it had much of a future, little realising how his ambivalence toward the work would be used by members of his secret committee to drive a wedge between the two.

Bengal beckons

But disagreements with Freud over the centrality of the Oedipus complex were not confined to Europeans. In 1920, Freud received the first of several letters from Girindra Sekhar Bose, an Indian medical doctor who had turned to experimental psychology and completed a doctoral thesis on the subject of repression, a copy of which he sent to Freud. Suitably impressed that psychoanalysis had been recognised in a “far country,” Freud wrote a short introduction for Bose when his thesis was published as a book. Following the formation of the Indian Psychoanalytic Society and its affiliation to the International Psychoanalytic Association in 1922, he also asked Bose if he would like his name appended to the masthead of both the Zeitschrift für Psychanalyse and the English language International.

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4. Editor’s note: Anna Freud, the youngest daughter of Sigmund Freud, and herself a psychoanalyst.
7. See Paul Roazen, Freud and his followers, p. 108 ff for an account.
Journal of Psychoanalysis. 9) It was only later when Bose sent him copies of a number of his own papers that Freud had an opportunity to scrutinise (and criticise) his Indian colleague's work for its deviating from orthodoxy.

Bose's theory rested on two radical departures from Freud's work. First was his theory of "the opposite wish" whereby whatever is consciously wished is harrowed to a wish for its opposite. This bipolarity comprises an active and a passive element, one of which is conscious, the other unconscious. As Bose put it, "the wish to strike somebody is accompanied by the unconscious wish to be struck." 10) During the course of free association to presenting symptoms, Bose claimed to observe a 'see-saw' mechanism at work in his patients whereby, instead of disappearing completely even after wishes had been made conscious, symptoms persisted and further associations revealed an unconscious element of the opposite type. As analysis proceeded, conscious tendencies abated or slipped back into the unconscious and the opposite repressed tendency was made conscious. These alterations continued in a see-saw fashion but, over time, the force of the opposite wishes weakened as the frequency of oscillation increased. Bose theorised that the see-sawing was proceeding at its own pace but was time consuming, so he also induced it by asking his analysands to put themselves in the place of the object and thus force a new set of associations.

It was partly on the basis of this theory that Bose also re-conceptualised the Oedipus complex. Arising out of his theory of the opposite tendency, the desire to be male is accompanied by a desire to be female, seen, according to Bose, "to be more easily untreated in Indian male patients than in European... The Oedipus complex is very often a combined parental image and this is a fact of great importance. I have reasons to believe that much of the motivation of the 'maternal deity' is traceable to this source." 11) The bringing to the fore of this figure has the effect of muting the threat of castration as exhibited in the Oedipal father since the fear is diminished by an opposing desire to be female, which implicitly accepts castration. According to Sudhir Kakar, the mention in Bose's letter of a maternal deity would have to be understood within Hindu culture as a possible reference to Devi, the great goddess. 12) In one explication of this myth, Kakar elaborates an Indian variant of Oedipus, termed by him the Ganesha complex. 13)

Ganesha was one of the two sons of the goddess Devi (the other being Skanda) who, amongst her many incarnations, is known as the conqueror of the demon Mohisuras, whom she destroyed along with most of his army. She effected this feat through the

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然而, 珍奇重新担负起赵氏数情的创办者的工作, 其已经与运
动中的其他人产生了争执, 尤其是
马里诺斯基曾经引用过其观点的奥
托・兰克。作为《意象》的编译者,他早已经发表了马里诺斯基和琼斯两
人的文章。在他的《出生创伤》一
文中, 兰克提出了一种激进的观
点: 所有那些与父亲的冲突（包
括赵氏数情式的冲突）都仅仅是更
为“关键时刻”有关出生冲突的虚
构性幻想。 14) 他将母亲的角色置于孩
子最初接触世界的核心, 此举突出
了母亲在养育孩子过程中的重要角
色, 而且认为母亲这种角色比父亲
的潜在角色更重要。最初, 赵氏数
他接受了兰克的工作, 但感觉
没有太大的发展前途, 因而没有意识
到他对兰克工作的模棱态度, 如何
被其秘书委员会、成员用来在他们
两个人之间制造分歧。 15)

孟加拉的召唤

关于赵氏数情结构的核心地
位, 人们会弗洛伊德的分歧并非
仅仅限于欧洲。1920年, 弗洛伊德
收到了来自吉林达德・卡尔・伯
豪斯的信。信中, 伯豪斯是一位印度医生, 
后来转向研究心理学。围绕压
抑问题扩大了他们之间的争论, 并将
一份信件寄给了弗洛伊德。 16) 弗洛
伊德感到欣慰, 精神分析法已经在
一个“遥远的国度”得到认可, 于是
当伯豪斯的博士论文即将出版时,
他曾为该书写了一个序。另外, 当1922年印度精神分析学会成立并

5. Ernest Jones, The Life of Sigmund Freud, 第 3 卷, 第 58页。
6. 笔者对 JQ. Reay's, Freud and His Followers, 第 398页, 有关此问题的访问。
7. 伯豪斯和弗洛伊德的通信首发在斯卡姆, The Journal of the Indian Psychosomatic Society, 第10卷 5-6期, 1956年。
8. 布鲁特勒和弗洛伊德的通信首发在1922年10月30日。
medium of riding naked to battle and dancing, cutting off the heads of thousands and thousands as she wielded her sword. When Maharasura tried to escape by transforming himself into an elephant, she cut off his trunk; when he transmuted to a buffalo whose thick hide made her swordplay impotent, she rode the buffalo to the point of exhaustion and then killed it by driving a spear through its neck. Karak suggests she is the phalic mother, the half-male, half-female who incorporates through her son’s attachment to her his wish to be a man without having to separate from her. However, her husband Shiva becomes a rival for his wife’s affection and in the mythical narrative kills his son who stands guard at her bedroom while she bathe. Ganesha represents that half of the boy who refuses individuation and liberation through maternal separation.

Freud’s written reply to Bose on receiving his theoretical and popular papers was neutral in tone. Christiane Hartnack, in her book Psychoanalysis in Colonial India, details several anecdotes that suggest, however, that Freud was far from happy about this revision, even though in his penultimate letter to Bose he acknowledges that the bipolar nature of wishes shows up in three relatively neglected areas of bisexuality: masculinity/femininity, love/hate and activity/passivity. Freud’s major criticism of Bose’s ideas was that they were too “moralistic,” an euphemism Freud seems to have employed to cover his disdain for what he took to be Bose’s lack of empirical support for his own theory. Nonetheless, in the same letter he invited Bose to write a paper detailing these central tenets for publication in the two international psychoanalytic journals, this seems not to have occurred.

An overture from Japan

During the period of his exchanges with Bose in the 1920s and early 1930s Freud also entered into correspondence with a psychologist and a literatus from Japan. Each of them had read and been impressed by Freud’s work and three had travelled to see him on separate visits with a view to being analysed by him. That story has been told elsewhere but its significance for the current paper is that one of these early admirers of Freud, Kosawa Hisakari, travelled to Vienna in 1931, and although he could not afford an analysis with Freud who passed him on to Richard Sterba, he did present him with a paper he had written about his ideas on the Edipsus complex as it might pertain to Japanese culture. Hoping for a considered response, Freud gave him only

反趋势也变得有意识。这些性转变化仍以一种拉伸的方式继续，但后来随着时间的推移，那些对立运动的力量会随著摆动频率的增加而减弱。伯特得出一种理论，这种拉伸虽然有其自身的节奏，但需要消时，于是他引导他的精神分析接受者，让其将自己置于对象的位

正是以此理论为部分基础，伯特也重新定义了俄狄浦斯情结。出于他的相对趋势理论，那种希望成为男性的情欲伴随成为女性的情欲。伯特自己就是“这种希望成为女性的情欲在印度人比在欧洋的男性病人中更容易发现。俄狄浦斯者通常成为一种综合的父权形象，而且这种事实具有十分重要的意义。我有理由相信，‘母性神明’的很大一部分动机来源于此。”[10]这个人物的重要意义在于它消化性关系的威胁，这如在俄狄浦斯为父身上所体现的出来的，因为那因素成为女性的相对性（暗中接受阉割）减缓了这种恐慌。按照苏荀尔古，卡尔的学说，俄狄浦斯中提到这样一位母性神明的做法需要从印度教文化中的伟大女神圣传说中予以理解。[11]在卡尔对此神话的一个解释中，他提出了俄狄浦斯的印度体，即乃沙情结。[12]

迦乃沙是女神圣维的两个儿子之一，另一个儿子叫斯堪达。圣维具有许多化身，其中之一是那摩乌马提。圣维被她消灭了马提乌斯拉及她大部分军队。她成就此举的主要方法是发送信马走向战场，并一路疾步走去，挥着她的宝剑砍下木板上面的头颅。当马提乌斯拉变成一只大象想要逃跑时，她砍下他的象牙；当他变成一只水牛时，他的耳朵使他的宝剑失去了作用，于是她踏上水牛并拼命追赶，使其痛苦不堪，然后用一只长矛刺入它的脖子而杀死了它。卡尔认为她是一位半男半女的性器崇拜的母亲。不过她儿子对她的依恋，使那种想要成为男人而同时又不与其分离的欲望落入自己。然而，她的丈夫成为妻子情感的对手，传说他杀死了在妻子浴室房间门口的儿子。迦乃沙的形象代表了半个多男孩，拒绝那种与母亲分离的个性化和自由化过程。

弗洛伊德在接到伯特寄来的理论性及通俗论文之后，给伯特回了一封调教中性汉字的信。克里斯汀内。哈特克拉在其《精神分析法在殖民地印度》一书中详细记述了几段轶闻，这些轶闻表明，弗洛伊德对伯特的这种修正十分不满，尽管他在给伯特的倒数第二封信中

10. E. Bose to Freud 11th April 1929, Ramsam. 126.
12. M. Oden, "Christiane Hartmack (2110) Psychoanalysis in Colonial India, Oxford University Press, 1950. 5. 1. The Uses of psychoanalysis in the treatment of Indian patients".

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the briefest of replies: "Dear Doctor, I have received and read your essay. I'll keep it with me since it seems as if you have no intention to use it otherwise." (18)

In Kosawa's version, Cidus becomes the Ajase complex in his paper entitled "Two Kinds of Guilt." (19) His modification takes account, in Japanese society, of the mutual dependency of events between mothers and their children. The myth of Ajase can be traced to two Buddhist texts. These are the Nirvana Sutra [The Sutra of Contemplation on the Buddha of Immeasurable Life], introduced to Japan between 700 and 1000 AD, and the Kyojoshinsho [The Collection of Passages expounding the True Teaching, Living, Faith, and Realizing of the Pure Land], written by Shinran Shonin (1173-1262), a celebrated Japanese priest of the Kamakura period (1185-1333). The myth centres on Ajase's lifelong dependency upon his mother toward whom he initially targets his hostility, and then becomes resolved to her unyielding affection. It tells of an Indian prince Ajatojus (Ajase) and his mother, Idaiko, a woman who fears that her fading beauty makes her no longer attractive to her husband, King Bimbashara, the protector of Buddha. This leads her to desire a child, and, on the advice of a soothsayer, to become pregnant with the reincarnated soul of a hermit after his death. Inimpatient for this natural event to occur, she hastens by murdering the hermit, who curses her on his deathbed with the prophecy that he will return in the form of her son, the Prince, to murder her husband. Fearful of her unborn son's revenge, the hermit's curse) she attempts to kill him at birth by dropping him from her womb at a great height. He survives the fall but breaks his finger, and is later reminded of the origins of this event by Dubadatta, an enemy of Buddha. (20) Engulfed in feelings of rage he attempts to kill his mother, Idaiko, but is overcome by such feelings of guilt that he falls seriously ill, and is only nursed back to health by her intervention. Idaiko's charitable act resolves her own conflicts over her son who recovers to become a wise king.

Kosawa's use of the story exemplifies, for him, the fundamental issue of birth. According to his own later student, Okonogi, who would go on to develop the psychical consequences of this structure himself, (21) the originality of Kosawa's Ajase complex lies in its themes of matricide and "prematernal narcotic" (from the Buddhist concept of missho, or ressentiment towards one's origins), in contrast to the Cidus Complex, which emphasizes incestuous desire and patricide. The mother wishes both to have her child and to kill it, her ambivalent feelings arising out of her desire to exercise power over its life and death, and the paranoid fear of retaliation that a projection of this desire onto the child brings in its wake. On the other hand, the ambivalent feelings of the child arise out of an idealisation of the mother as a love

14. Freud to Kosawa, July 30th 1932. In German in the original.
20. One of the Chinese characters for Ajase's name means "broken finger".

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object and the knowledge that she is capable of killing it. As to the question of the two kinds of guilt in the original title, in the Greek story, Oedipus, upon realizing the horror of his act(s) inflicts self-punishment by tearing out his eyes, an act motivated by the burden of his crime. According to Kosawa, Ajase's feelings of guilt change over the course of the story's development. After attempting to kill his mother he is frightened by punishment and falls ill. This resembles the "persecutory guilt" of which members of the Kleinian school speak. After Ajase's mother pardons him, he seeks remorse toward her, what Kleinians call "reparative guilt." As Kosawa's paper dates from 1932, the question of whether his thinking was influenced by Melanie Klein's ideas, or anticipated them, remains an open one.

Like Bose's version, Kosawa's can be seen as a considered modification of the orthodox view of psychic development at that time, and another attempt at an Asian cultural variant on what, for Freud, was a universal mechanism. Freud's evasive comment on it suggests his possible displeasure at its contents.

The Chinese case

Although Freud faced no similar problem in being presented with a reworked version of Oedipus from China, in 1929, nonetheless, he received a letter from the dissident Chinese intellectual Zhang Shizhao. Although the letter has disappeared, Freud's extant brief reply suggested its contents.

Most esteemed Professor,

In whatever way you wish to carry out your intention, whether it is by paving the way for the development of psychoanalysis in your homeland - China - or by contributions to our journal Image in which you would judge against your own language our conceptions about the nature of archaic modes of expression, I will be extremely pleased. What I quoted in my lectures from the Chinese, was taken from an article in the Encyclopaedia Britannica (11th edition).

Very respectfully,
Yours Freud

22. This plays on a strong cultural element for it was sometimes a custom in Japan up to the Edo period (1603-1868) for mothers to kill their children in times of famine.
23. Klein wrote of the need for the baby, in the course of its development, to separate good and bad aspects of the same object about which it has fantasies, and about which it can harbour ambivalent feelings of love and hate. Beginning with anxieties over being attacked by a bad object (threat/punishment), the baby shifts its fears for the safety and return of the good. Its feelings of perception give way to depression, which becomes the motive for separation. See, for example, Melanie Klein, Love, Guilt and Reparation, and other works, London, Hogarth Press, 1975.
24. Although Freud initially offered to analyze knowles at a reduced rate, his analysis was eventually turned over to Richard Strauss.
26. Freud's letter first appeared as a photographic reprint of the original appearing in a preface to Zhang Shizhao's translation of Sigmund Freud's translation of Sigmund Freud's translation of Friedrich Nietzsche's "The Birth of Tragedy" (1955). The letter was not translated into Chinese until many years later and appears in Yu Feng Guo's Psychoanalysis and Modern Chinese Novels (1997). The translation here is from the German photocopy.

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Zhong had worked a couple of years earlier on a translation of Freud’s Selbstdarstellung. He was likely making overtures to Freud about the possibility of disseminating his works in China through translations, but the focus of the reply suggested he was curious about Freud’s understanding of Chinese, and was intending to write an article for *Imago* testing his assumptions. As it happened, Zhong’s *article(s)* for *Imago* never materialised. Meanwhile, he published his translation of Freud’s autobiography a year later. (27)

Intellecutals in China in the 1920s had shown considerable interest in psychoanalysis as judged by the number of translations of Freud’s works and those of his early followers into Chinese, (28) secondary articles on psychoanalysis, (29) and the use of Freudian ideas in Chinese literature. (30) Although this interest did not develop a therapeutic culture of depth in psychology—much of the focus at the time was on Freud’s theory of sublimation as a healthy outlet for unsuitable desires which could then be put into the service of others (31) —the debates that unfolded in this period seriously challenged the idea that the *Idipal* myth stood as a psychodynamic exemplar of Chinese family structure. To the contrary, as contemporary scholarship has shown, the Confucian model, stressing a lifelong filial devotion by sons in respect of their fathers, required a different myth. (32) One likely candidate is to be found in the classical story of the Bend in Fen River (*Fenhe Wan*), also known as Xue Li’s Return Home (*Xue Li Huan jia*), which became incorporated into Peking Opera.

The story concerns Xue Li, or Xue Rengui, a soldier a fortune of the Tang period who became a high ranking military officer and whose skills at archery brought him to the attention of the Emperor who assigned him duty in a distant land. The crux of the tale hinges on his return home to his wife whom he has not seen since he left her pregnant 18 years earlier. As Xue approaches his home, he sees a young man standing on the bank of the River Fen skilfully shooting geese and challenges him to a test of his marksmanship. The young man accepts the challenge but Xue, instead of shooting geese, shoots the youth instead, claiming that he could have spared the boy but could not let another live who was superior in marksmanship. When he finally arrives home the exchange with his wife turns to doubts of her fidelity, exacerbated by seeing an unfamiliar pair of shoes under their marital bed. His wife chides him for his doubts saying the shoes belong to his son

27. It was in Zhong’s preface to his translation that a photographic reprint of Freud’s letter first appeared. The letter was dated May 27th 1929.

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whose is out hunting. The dénouement comes with their horrifying discovery that Xue has killed
his son.

The tale's structure is almost the obverse of the *Oedipal* myth. It is Xue, the father
rather than the son who leaves home to make his fortune (*Oedipus* was abandoned), and
it is the father who kills the son. But like the *Oedipal* myth, the killing is of one to
whom the perpetrator is unaware of his familial relationship, making them equally
tragic. The doubts the father has about his wife's fidelity reveal a tension in the father-son
relationship that can be traced to the particularly intense mother-son tie exemplified in
the 24 examples of a son's devotion to his parents, as described in the classic Confucian
text of filial piety. This myth better serves as an exemplar of the Chinese family structure,
which stresses a lifelong devotion to parents and discourages a breaking away to a
newfound individuality that typifies Western European families.

Even without the myth's being "discovered" by commentators of the early Chinese
psychoanalytic scene, it is clear that, when the first psychoanalyst Bingham Dai (Dai
Bingyong) began practicing in China, his neo-Freudian training, coupled with his
sensitivity to and pedagogical experience of the culture, predisposed him to a cultural
framework that had departed from Freudian orthodoxy. Dai, a graduate of St. Johns
University in Shanghai, had undergone training by Leon Saul and supervision by
Karin Horney while studying for a doctorate in sociology in Chicago. He had been
recommended for this by Harry Stack Sullivan who, during Dai’s tenure, had approached him at
a Rockefeller seminar in 1932. He returned to China in 1935 to take up a position at Peking
Union Medical College, teaching medical psychology to Chinese doctors, setting up a
small analytic training group, and seeing patients.

He worked at sensitizing the doctors to forms of therapy based on a system of thought
that departed from the Freudian frame of reference. Like his mentors, instead of seeing
personality problems solely in terms of intra-psychic tensions, he sought to understand
them in their social cultural contexts. While this orientation owed much to Sullivan's
influence, it had its origins for Dai in an earlier series of intellectual encounters that
led him to reject the Christian teaching of the missionary college in which he had been
educated and to embrace Confucianism. He was inspired in this move by his reading of
a hugely influential text by Liang Shuming, *Eastern and Western Cultures and their
Philosophies*, published in 1922. Liang, a former Buddhist scholar who had turned to
Confucianism, was a staunch conservative cultural critic in a period of significant cultural
reform. His book spoke of the need to identify, cultivate and protect the essence of Chinese
culture from the onslaught of newly imported Western scientific ideas. This was not in
itself a new concern. While in the final decade of the Qing dynasty, prior to the formation
of the Republic, there had been many calls for modernisation, a compromise had been

The story of Xue’s son is one of the best examples of the *Oedipal* myth in Chinese
mythology. Xue, the father, leaves his son to make his fortune, and when Xue returns, he
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sought in which Western learning could be imported only to the extent it did not devalue the essence of Chinese culture. Although many references to national essence were vague, and there were differences about how best to preserve it, there was general agreement amongst scholars, poets and educators that it signified a return to Confucian ethical values, most notably the principle that, in the flux of life, all elements are bound together harmoniously and are best expressed in the concept of jen (benevolence). Reacting against the “modern condition,” it was Liang’s view that learning based solely on Western science would foster the critically rational mind, but this in turn would threaten, by critical devaluation, all values. The solution to this was that learning should proceed in contexts in which, not only intellectual, but moral improvement might be achieved. (33)

How far Dai would have developed his psychoanalysis within this context remains unclear because he left in 1939 for America owing to the intensification of the Sino-Japanese war, bringing his program to a close. (34) Psychoanalysis in China was not to be revived for another forty years.

A summing up

What are we to conclude from this very brief account of Asian encounters with Freud and orthodox psychoanalysis? In all cases of direct contact with Freud himself, his correspondents not only read and admired his work but, a priori, had begun working on their own transformations of his ideas. This is in sharp contrast to developments in the West where in Europe and elsewhere there had been an initial reception and acceptance of orthodoxy before revisions began to set in. This did not please Freud, but we know from the period of his life in which these Asian encounters began that he was already in some physical decline and that the psychoanalytic movement had, in any case, grown too big to be contained. More significantly Freud’s tendency to see his discovery of the Oedipus complex as a universal phenomenon might have blinded him to the cultural variants his correspondents were keen to impress upon him, variants, it must be said, which need not have caused him too much concern since the general principles arising from his elaboration would universally apply — his formulation that parental projections contribute to the formation of psychic structures (superego and the mechanism of defence) most notably.

If cultural myths have been found to support family structures out of which different psychodynamic constellations arise, the strong emphasis in Asian cultures generally on relationships taking priority over development of the individual self make the goal of


therapy different too. Where in the past the means of arriving at this goal have been seriously drawn into question, there has been sufficient work in the past two decades, notably in the writings of Alan Roland, Sudhir Kakar, and Ashis Nandy, dealing with India and Japan, to suggest that psychoanalysis in an Asian context is possible, and is practised, albeit in culturally adapted modes, but, as elsewhere, it must contend not so much with revisions to orthodoxy as with rival forms of psychotherapeutic and psychopharmacologic practice, which currently dominate all cultures in which psychoanalytic ideas can be said to exist.

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静也译