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*“Asian Spirit” and the Foundation of Modern Chinese Culture:
Intellectual Controversies in China during the early 1920s*

「亞洲精神」與現代中國文化建設——1920 年代初中國知識界內的文化爭論

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Abstract

This paper, by examining (1) Liang Qichao (1873 – 1929) and Liang Shuming’s (1893 – 1988) reassessment of Asian civilizations in the early 1920s, (2) the polemic over science and metaphysics that broke out in 1923, (3) the Bengali philosopher Rabindranath Tagore’s (1861 – 1941) visit to China in 1924 and the Chinese educated public’s response to his critique of scientism, utilitarianism and excessive material progress in the West, and (4) Dr. Sun Yat-sen’s idea of Pan-Asianism, attempts not only to show modern Chinese intellectuals’ changing attitude toward Western civilization, but also to highlight how they conceived of the new role of “Asian Spirit” in the foundation of modern Chinese culture. It seeks also to address the question of whether their visions and ideas are still relevant today.