

# Progress, the Book of Changes and the nature of history in modern China

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Lipsius building, LUF room (148)



## Abstract

The dominant view of history in modern China seems to be a teleological and progressive view centered around the national subject and the process of it becoming aware of itself. In my research I focus on Chinese historians that have challenged the Western progressivist view of history and have developed alternative concepts of national and in some cases even non-national history that link back to Chinese historiographical traditions, some of which have again become popular in recent years.

In this talk I will focus on Liu Yizheng's (柳詒徵, 1880-1956) theory of history and his ideas on the relationship between history and ethics. Although Liu seems to resemble in many aspects a modern historian, adopting new methods and ideas, after 1925-1926 he increasingly relied on a view and theory of history centered on the traditional notion that "the core of history is ethics". In contrast to contemporary Western historians and the crisis of ethical relativism triggered by historicism, Liu relies on history to illuminate and confirm China's ethical tradition and the socio-political order centered on the rule by virtue. However, Liu Yizheng, nevertheless wants to partially modernize historiography and the socio-political order.



Axel Schneider is Professor for Modern China Studies at Leiden University and co-director of MEARC. His research interests center around the development of modern Chinese historiography and historical thinking, and on modern Chinese conservatism and nationalism in terms of its history and its theoretical implications. Besides, he has been researching the process of political reforms on Taiwan and the discussions of Taiwanese identity. In 2003 he received the VICI large research grant from the Netherlands Scientific Research Organization (NWO) with prof.dr. R. Kersten (Modern Japan Studies) to research "Historical Consciousness and the Future of Modern China and Japan: Conservatism, Revisionism, and National Identity."

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