

Review

Exploring the Cultural Logic of the Eastward Spread of Western Learning and the Sinicization of Marxism

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Abstract: This review paper examines the cultural logic underpinning two historically intertwined intellectual movements: the eastward spread of Western learning and the sinicization of Marxism. It moves beyond descriptive chronology to analyze how epistemic frameworks, institutional mediation, and sociopolitical exigencies shape the reception, adaptation, and reconstitution of foreign ideas within Chinese intellectual history. The paper identifies recurring patterns---such as selective translation, conceptual grafting, and normative reinterpretation---that characterize knowledge transfer across civilizational boundaries. It distinguishes between instrumental adoption, where foreign theories serve immediate pragmatic ends, and structural integration, where they become embedded in indigenous categories of meaning and practice. Attention is given to the role of state-led ideological projects, academic institutions, and generational shifts in mediating theoretical importation. The analysis reveals that neither process operates through passive assimilation nor wholesale rejection; rather, both unfold as dialectical engagements wherein external doctrines are subjected to rigorous contextual calibration. This recalibration involves semantic realignment, historical anchoring, and ethical reframing---processes that transform imported systems into locally intelligible and politically functional paradigms. The paper further contends that the sinicization of Marxism cannot be understood apart from the longer arc of epistemic negotiation initiated by the eastward spread of Western learning, as both share underlying mechanisms of cultural translation and ideological domestication. By foregrounding continuity in method rather than rupture in content, the study offers a coherent framework for interpreting modern Chinese intellectual development as an internally consistent, culturally grounded project of theoretical innovation.

Keywords: cultural logic; sinicization; Western learning

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1. Introduction

1.1. Defining the Dual Trajectory

This chapter introduces two historically significant yet conceptually interwoven phenomena: the eastward spread of Western learning and the sinicization of Marxism [1]. Rather than treating them as discrete episodes, this analysis positions both as sustained, culturally mediated engagements with foreign theoretical systems. Their convergence reflects a deeper structural pattern in China's intellectual history---namely, the recurrent process of selective assimilation, epistemic adaptation, and endogenous reconfiguration. The focus here is not on biographical trajectories or institutional chronologies but on the underlying cultural logic that governs how external knowledge frameworks are interpreted, translated, and re-embedded within indigenous conceptual ecologies [2, 3]. Such logic operates through mechanisms of semantic resonance, historical analogy, and pragmatic reinterpretation, enabling continuity amid transformation [4].

1.2. Scope and Analytical Orientation

This study confines its analytical scope to the structural dynamics governing the eastward transmission of Western knowledge and the localized articulation of Marxist

theory within Chinese intellectual frameworks [5]. It foregrounds four interlocking mechanisms: the epistemic selection criteria that govern which Western concepts enter translation circuits; the linguistic and terminological strategies deployed in rendering foreign doctrines into Chinese; the conceptual recalibrations required for theoretical compatibility with indigenous philosophical traditions; and the institutional pathways through which adapted frameworks acquire disciplinary legitimacy [6]. Methodologically, the analysis maintains strict neutrality regarding ideological valence, treating all doctrinal formations as observable phenomena rather than normative commitments [1]. Emphasis falls exclusively on traceable practices---textual interventions, pedagogical protocols, curricular architectures---rather than evaluative judgments about fidelity or authenticity [7, 8].

1.3. Significance of Cultural Logic

Understanding the cultural logic underlying the eastward spread of Western learning and the sinicization of Marxism is indispensable for interpreting China's modern intellectual trajectory as neither passive reception nor arbitrary adaptation. This logic constitutes a historically sedimented yet dynamically responsive framework---comprising implicit rules, structural constraints, and discursive affordances---that governs how foreign concepts are selectively assimilated, critically reframed, and generatively transformed [9]. It mediates epistemic translation across civilizational registers, enabling coherence without homogenization and agency without rupture. By foregrounding this logic, analysis shifts from surface-level ideological borrowing to deep structural negotiation, revealing how endogenous cultural grammars actively shape the conditions of possibility for theoretical innovation. Such insight is foundational for any rigorous account of China's distinctive path of intellectual modernity [3].

2. Historical Overview

2.1. From Late Imperial Encounters to Republican Reconfiguration

The transmission of Western learning into China unfolded through distinct historical modalities, beginning with Jesuit-mediated scientific and cosmological texts during the Ming-Qing transition. These early encounters privileged lexical substitution---mapping Latin or Portuguese terms onto classical Chinese categories---while preserving Confucian epistemic hierarchies. By the late Qing, reformist intellectuals reoriented translation toward conceptual hybridization, selectively appropriating international law, political economy, and constitutional theory to diagnose dynastic crisis. This shift reflected not passive reception but active epistemic negotiation: Western concepts were neither fully assimilated nor outright rejected, but recalibrated through indigenous frameworks of statecraft, moral cultivation, and historical cyclicity. Translation practices evolved from glossarial fidelity to hermeneutic reinterpretation, enabling new discursive formations around sovereignty, rights, and institutional modernity. The Republican era intensified this reconfiguration, as vernacularization, journal-based discourse, and transnational intellectual networks accelerated semantic innovation. Crucially, these processes were never unidirectional; they involved recursive feedback between translated concepts and evolving Chinese sociopolitical realities [2]. The resulting knowledge formations laid structural groundwork for later theoretical syntheses, establishing patterns of selective adaptation, terminological invention, and philosophical repositioning that would inform subsequent engagements with Marxist thought [1, 5].

2.2. May Fourth and the Epistemic Turn

The May Fourth era constituted a decisive epistemic rupture in modern Chinese intellectual history, marked by an unprecedented methodological self-awareness. Intellectuals moved beyond piecemeal adoption of Western ideas toward systematic civilizational comparison, interrogating the structural logics of Confucian orthodoxy, liberal democracy, and scientific rationalism as competing paradigms [6, 7]. This shift coincided with the institutional embedding of Western academic disciplines---philosophy,

sociology, economics, and natural sciences---within newly founded universities, thereby standardizing curricula, research protocols, and scholarly evaluation criteria. Crucially, this period witnessed the emergence of indigenous critical frameworks that insisted on evaluating foreign doctrines not through uncritical assimilation but via rigorous hermeneutic negotiation grounded in China's historical experience and philosophical resources. The resulting dialectic between exogenous conceptual tools and endogenous epistemic priorities laid the groundwork for later theoretical syntheses, including the disciplined reinterpretation of Marxist categories within Chinese sociohistorical conditions [8]. Such methodological reflexivity reconfigured knowledge production itself, transforming translation into interpretation, reception into reconstruction, and ideological importation into structured theoretical labor [5, 6].

2.3. Post-1949 Institutional Consolidation

Marxist theory entered China after 1949 not as a monolithic doctrine but as a stratified corpus comprising Soviet interpretations, classical European texts, and emergent global Marxist currents [7]. Institutional consolidation entailed rigorous curricular standardization, whereby theoretical content was hierarchically sequenced according to doctrinal priority and pedagogical function. Textbooks were systematically revised to align with centralized ideological frameworks, ensuring conceptual coherence across educational tiers [2, 5]. Teacher training programs emphasized fidelity to authorized interpretations, while academic journals enforced terminological uniformity and methodological orthodoxy [8]. Theoretical dissemination followed a deliberate temporal logic: foundational principles preceded dialectical applications, which in turn preceded context-specific adaptations. This sequencing reinforced epistemic authority and minimized interpretive divergence. Curriculum design privileged historical materialism as the analytical anchor, structuring all subsequent engagement with political economy, philosophy, and social theory. Pedagogical codification extended beyond syllabi to include standardized examination rubrics, classroom protocols, and research evaluation criteria. As a result, theoretical reception became inseparable from institutional architecture---knowledge transmission was mediated through tightly regulated channels that prioritized doctrinal stability over pluralistic inquiry [1, 6]. The layered character of imported Marxism thus underwent systematic compression into a coherent, teachable, and administratively manageable framework.

3. Core Theme a: Mechanisms of Epistemic Translation

3.1. Semantic Calibration and Lexical Innovation

The epistemic translation of Western concepts into Chinese intellectual discourse proceeded not through literal lexical substitution but via deliberate semantic calibration and strategic lexical innovation. Terms such as freedom, dialectics, and class were subjected to rigorous conceptual reanchoring, wherein their meanings were recalibrated against pre-existing philosophical frameworks rooted in Confucian ethics, Daoist cosmology, and Buddhist epistemology. This process entailed more than terminological adaptation; it constituted a hermeneutic negotiation aimed at stabilizing foreign categories within indigenous discursive registers [1]. For instance, the term dialectics was frequently rendered using classical formulations evoking yin-yang interplay or the dynamic tension between *li* and *qi*, thereby aligning Hegelian and Marxist conceptions with longstanding metaphysical traditions [1]. Similarly, class was reconceptualized through relational idioms drawn from Confucian social ontology---emphasizing positional roles within hierarchical structures rather than purely economic determinants. Lexical innovation emerged where no adequate premodern equivalent existed: neologisms were constructed by combining classical morphemes to generate semantically resonant hybrids, ensuring both philological legitimacy and pedagogical intelligibility. Such calibrations were neither arbitrary nor merely pragmatic; they reflected a sustained effort to embed Western theoretical constructs within a coherent Sinic epistemic architecture. The resulting terminological formations enabled sustained theoretical

engagement while preserving conceptual continuity across historical epistemic regimes. This translational labor thus functioned as a foundational condition for the substantive integration of Marxism into Chinese intellectual life, transforming abstract doctrine into a locally intelligible and normatively grounded framework.

3.2. Historical Anchoring and Temporal Framing

Historical anchoring functions as a critical epistemic strategy through which foreign theoretical frameworks acquire discursive legitimacy and cognitive resonance within indigenous intellectual ecosystems [9]. Rather than treating imported doctrines as self-contained, transhistorical abstractions, practitioners systematically embed them within preexisting temporal schemas---dynastic chronologies, cosmological cycles, or philosophical genealogies---to render their structures intelligible and normatively grounded. This process operates not as mere metaphorical analogy but as active hermeneutic recalibration: Hegelian dialectics are refracted through yin-yang relationality, where contradiction is not resolved through sublation but sustained as generative tension; Marxist historical materialism is mapped onto cyclical models of dynastic rise and decline, recasting class struggle as a recurrent dynamic within civilizational endurance rather than linear progression toward rupture. Such temporal framing reorients the epistemic authority of theory away from its originary context and toward endogenous benchmarks of validity---continuity, balance, and moral efficacy become interpretive filters that selectively activate, attenuate, or reconfigure conceptual elements. Crucially, this anchoring does not entail erasure of foreign provenance but establishes a dialogic temporality wherein Western concepts enter into sustained conversation with classical paradigms, acquiring new semantic weight through juxtaposition rather than substitution [6]. The result is neither wholesale adoption nor defensive rejection, but a calibrated synthesis wherein theoretical fidelity is measured not by doctrinal purity but by functional coherence within historically sedimented frameworks of meaning-making. This mechanism ensures that translation remains an act of situated reinterpretation, demanding continuous negotiation between chronological linearity and cyclical recurrence, universal claim and contextual embodiment [4].

3.3. Normative Reframing and Ethical Alignment

Normative reframing constituted a decisive epistemic mechanism through which imported Western doctrines underwent systematic ethical alignment with enduring Confucian and communitarian value hierarchies. Rather than passive reception, translation entailed active normative calibration---evaluating foreign concepts against foundational moral coordinates such as relational harmony, intergenerational responsibility, and collective flourishing [8]. This recalibration generated distinctive doctrinal emphases: social cohesion consistently superseded individual autonomy as the primary political telos; developmental equity displaced procedural formalism as the benchmark of institutional legitimacy; and adaptive governance prioritized contextual responsiveness over abstract universalism [6]. The reinterpretation of rights discourse, for instance, foregrounded duties toward family and community as constitutive of personhood rather than framing rights as pre-political entitlements. Similarly, historical materialism was rearticulated to emphasize dialectical continuity between past ethical formations and present socio-economic structures, thereby affirming cultural agency in historical development [9]. Such reframing was neither dilution nor distortion but a rigorous hermeneutic practice grounded in substantive moral reasoning. It instantiated what might be termed ethical fidelity---the commitment to preserving core normative commitments while accommodating new conceptual resources. This process ensured that theoretical imports did not merely occupy discursive space but actively reconstituted intellectual frameworks in ways consonant with long-standing civilizational priorities. The resulting syntheses were not hybrid compromises but internally coherent systems wherein foreign categories acquired locally intelligible meanings through sustained normative negotiation. Consequently, epistemic translation functioned less as linguistic

conversion and more as moral architecture---reconstructing theoretical scaffolding to support distinctly situated visions of justice, progress, and human flourishing.

4. Core Theme B: Institutional Mediation and Generational Transmission

4.1. State-Led Curriculum Design and Textbook Standardization

State-led curriculum design functions as a primary institutional filter through which Western theoretical frameworks and Marxist doctrine undergo deliberate epistemic recalibration. Official textbook standardization imposes a hierarchical sequencing of concepts, compressing complex intellectual genealogies into pedagogically manageable units aligned with national developmental imperatives. This process entails selective condensation---omitting contested debates, marginalizing heterodox interpretations, and foregrounding historically sanctioned syntheses---thereby constructing authoritative interpretive templates [3]. Such templates do not merely transmit content; they configure cognitive scaffolding that shapes how successive generations apprehend conceptual boundaries, identify legitimate problem spaces, and orient critical inquiry. Curriculum documents encode normative assumptions about epistemic legitimacy, privileging certain modes of reasoning while constraining others through syntactic framing, lexical choice, and narrative arc [3, 9]. The resulting textual uniformity across provincial jurisdictions ensures broad conceptual homogeneity, yet simultaneously narrows the range of permissible analytical entry points into foundational theories [6]. Pedagogical materials thus operate less as neutral conduits and more as active agents of epistemic governance, reproducing standardized hermeneutic dispositions across cohorts. This institutional mediation does not suppress engagement with foreign thought but rather rechannels it through state-defined semantic pathways, transforming theoretical pluralism into structured conceptual coherence. The outcome is not ideological closure per se, but rather a disciplined openness---one wherein theoretical import is measured not by internal logical consistency alone, but by functional resonance with nationally articulated developmental logics. Such curricular architecture sustains continuity while enabling calibrated adaptation, anchoring theoretical reception within enduring institutional rhythms [4].

4.2. Academic Disciplinary Formation and Boundary Work

Disciplinary formation in philosophy, political economy, and historiography functioned as critical institutional filters through which Western theoretical frameworks were selectively absorbed, reconfigured, and stabilized [9]. Each field developed distinct boundary-work protocols: philosophy emphasized conceptual fidelity to dialectical foundations while permitting terminological innovation; political economy prioritized structural correspondence with material conditions, allowing methodological pluralism only when aligned with developmental imperatives; historiography enforced narrative coherence across temporal scales, sanctioning interpretive deviation only where it reinforced continuity of civilizational agency [9]. These disciplines did not merely translate foreign paradigms but actively co-produced epistemic thresholds---defining permissible divergence from source doctrines, calibrating tolerance for internal heterodoxy, and institutionalizing mechanisms for adjudicating theoretical legitimacy. Academic journals, graduate curricula, and peer review conventions served as recursive reinforcement systems, normalizing certain modes of engagement while marginalizing others. The resulting disciplinary architectures exhibited both rigidity and elasticity: rigid in their commitment to foundational axioms, yet elastic in accommodating context-sensitive adaptations that preserved functional utility without compromising normative integrity [8]. This dual character enabled sustained intellectual transmission across generations, wherein each cohort inherited not static doctrines but dynamic frameworks capable of iterative refinement [2]. Crucially, such mediation was never neutral---it embedded implicit hierarchies of epistemic authority, privileging certain forms of evidence, argumentation, and scholarly habitus. The cumulative effect was a structured

pluralism: internally diverse yet externally bounded, historically grounded yet prospectively adaptive, and institutionally anchored without being ideologically ossified.

4.3. Generational Shifts in Interpretive Authority

Generational shifts in interpretive authority reflect a profound transformation in epistemic posture toward Western intellectual traditions. Early-twentieth-century translators approached Western texts as authoritative sources demanding faithful transmission, prioritizing lexical precision and doctrinal fidelity over contextual reinterpretation [6]. Their labor was anchored in a hermeneutic framework that presupposed the intrinsic universality and normative weight of Western philosophical and scientific discourse [1, 3]. By mid-century, scholars increasingly treated such texts not as fixed canons but as raw material for conceptual synthesis---engaging them dialectically to reconstruct theoretical frameworks responsive to local historical conditions and developmental imperatives. This phase emphasized structural adaptation, terminological innovation, and systematic integration rather than exegetical deference. Contemporary researchers operate within a markedly different epistemic ecology: Western theories are now routinely subjected to empirical scrutiny, historical genealogy, and comparative validation against indigenous knowledge practices and socio-institutional realities. Interpretive authority has thus migrated from textual fidelity to methodological rigor, from doctrinal assimilation to critical appropriation. This evolution signals neither linear progress nor ideological retreat but a maturing scholarly disposition---one wherein theoretical tools are evaluated not by origin or pedigree but by functional adequacy, explanatory scope, and capacity for reflexive self-correction [6]. The institutionalization of peer review, archival training, and interdisciplinary methodology further consolidates this shift, embedding generational change within durable academic infrastructures. Such transformations underscore how intellectual authority is not merely inherited but actively reconstituted through evolving pedagogical norms, research conventions, and evaluative criteria across successive cohorts of scholars.

5. Comparison & Challenges

5.1. Parallel Logics, Divergent Constraints

Both processes exhibit structural isomorphism: translation mediates epistemic transfer, historical analogy enables contextual anchoring, and normative filtering aligns foreign concepts with indigenous frameworks. Yet critical divergences persist [9]. The eastward spread of Western learning unfolded over centuries, driven by decentralized scholarly networks operating under imperial bureaucratic tolerance, where ideological stakes remained largely academic. In contrast, the sinicization of Marxism unfolds within compressed temporal horizons, subject to institutionalized coordination across party-state apparatuses, where theoretical fidelity directly informs governance praxis. The former permitted iterative reinterpretation through layered commentarial traditions; the latter demands doctrinal coherence amid rapid sociostructural transformation. Moreover, while Western learning entered through porous intellectual frontiers---missionary presses, treaty-port academies, private study societies---the sinicization process operates through vertically integrated mechanisms: standardized curricula, centralized editorial oversight, and policy-directed research agendas. These constraints shape not only methodological pathways but also the permissible scope of conceptual adaptation [3]. Consequently, parallel logics yield asymmetrical outcomes: one cultivates pluralistic epistemic hybridity; the other prioritizes functional integration within a unified ideological architecture. Such distinctions underscore that structural similarity does not entail functional equivalence.

5.2. Tensions between Fidelity and Functionality

The tension between fidelity and functionality manifests as a structural dialectic wherein theoretical preservation competes with pragmatic efficacy. Imported frameworks---whether epistemic, methodological, or ideological---enter local contexts bearing inherent normative commitments that often conflict with existing institutional

logics, historical trajectories, and sociocultural constraints. Adaptation is rarely neutral; it involves selective retention, strategic omission, and conceptual rearticulation, each carrying distinct legitimacy claims within academic discourse and policy implementation. Justifications for deviation typically invoke contextual specificity, functional necessity, or developmental stage, yet such rationales remain contested across disciplinary boundaries. Some scholars treat modification as hermeneutic responsibility, others as epistemic compromise [8]. The normalization of adaptation occurs not through consensus but through iterative practice---repetition in pedagogy, codification in curricula, and institutionalization in governance structures. Critique emerges along dual axes: one emphasizing theoretical coherence and universal validity, the other foregrounding situated utility and historical agency. This dynamic resists resolution, sustaining a productive friction that continually reshapes both the imported system and the receiving tradition. Neither fidelity nor functionality operates as an absolute standard; rather, their interplay constitutes an ongoing negotiation of meaning, authority, and applicability within evolving knowledge ecologies.

5.3. Limits of Domestication and Emergent Hybridities

Domestication processes frequently exceed their intended parameters, generating conceptual hybrids that resist assimilation into either source or host frameworks. Instances of theoretical overreach---such as the conflation of dialectical materialism with classical Confucian cosmology or the grafting of Enlightenment epistemology onto premodern historiographical paradigms---produce internal tensions that destabilize foundational assumptions. These emergent configurations do not merely reflect translation errors; they instantiate new epistemic logics whose coherence cannot be reduced to either Western origin or Sinicized form. Such hybridities expose structural limits in top-down ideological calibration, revealing how localized interpretive practices generate autonomous theoretical trajectories. The resulting contradictions---between historical teleology and cyclical temporality, between individual agency and relational ontology---are not anomalies but constitutive features of cross-civilizational knowledge transfer. When adaptation yields irreconcilable conceptual pairings, it signals not failure but threshold conditions: moments where domestication ceases to serve instrumental ends and instead catalyzes endogenous theoretical innovation [2, 6]. This dynamic underscores that intellectual exchange is never unidirectional nor fully controllable; rather, it operates through recursive feedback loops wherein reception actively reshapes the terms of transmission. Consequently, the boundary between fidelity and transformation dissolves, giving rise to novel constellations of meaning that elude both original doctrine and deliberate reformulation.

6. Future Perspectives

6.1. Digital Archiving and New Modes of Textual Engagement

Digital archiving transforms the study of intellectual transmission by enabling precise, scalable analysis of textual evolution across linguistic and cultural boundaries. Multilingual corpora facilitate systematic comparison of translation strategies, revealing how conceptual frameworks shift during cross-cultural mediation [1]. Algorithm-assisted methods detect subtle patterns of lexical substitution, syntactic restructuring, and semantic attenuation---illuminating pathways of conceptual drift that traditional close reading may overlook. These tools support granular mapping of influence networks, tracing how ideas migrate, mutate, and stabilize within new discursive environments [1]. Such approaches demand methodological recalibration: hermeneutic depth must integrate with computational breadth, while archival design prioritizes interoperability, metadata rigor, and multilingual ontologies. Future scholarship will increasingly rely on hybrid epistemologies that balance algorithmic pattern recognition with contextual historical judgment, thereby advancing a more dynamic, evidence-rich understanding of intellectual adaptation.

6.2. Global South Epistemic Alliances

Emerging epistemic alliances among Global South societies signal a paradigmatic shift in theoretical exchange, moving beyond bilateral West-East frameworks toward multilateral configurations grounded in shared postcolonial experience. These collaborations prioritize co-production of knowledge rather than unidirectional importation, foregrounding situated epistemologies that challenge hegemonic universals. By centering common struggles with epistemic marginalization, linguistic displacement, and institutional dependency, such alliances foster methodological pluralism and reconfigure standards of validity. They enable joint interrogation of concepts like modernity, development, and rationality---not as fixed categories but as historically contingent constructs requiring contextual recalibration. This realignment supports the emergence of transregional intellectual infrastructures capable of sustaining long-term dialogue, mutual translation, and iterative theory-building. Crucially, it advances epistemic justice not through replacement but through relational reconstitution---where Sinicized Marxism, Indian subaltern studies, Brazilian decolonial thought, and African philosophical traditions engage as co-equal interlocutors in reconstructing global knowledge ecologies [6].

6.3. Pedagogical Reorientation and Critical Literacy

Pedagogical reorientation demands embedding historical awareness of epistemic translation into advanced curricula as rigorous analytical training---not ideological transmission [2]. Students must examine how concepts migrate across linguistic, institutional, and civilizational boundaries, acquiring new semantic weight, pragmatic function, and normative resonance in non-Western contexts. This entails close reading of translated texts, comparative analysis of terminological shifts, and reconstruction of conceptual genealogies across temporal and spatial registers. Critical literacy emerges not through prescriptive interpretation but through disciplined attention to the material conditions---lexical gaps, syntactic constraints, rhetorical conventions---that shape conceptual adaptation. Such training cultivates intellectual humility toward knowledge production, foregrounds the situatedness of theoretical frameworks, and equips learners to navigate epistemic pluralism with methodological rigor [9]. It reframes translation as constitutive labor rather than neutral transfer, revealing how meaning is co-produced at the interface of power, language, and historical contingency.

7. Conclusion

7.1. Synthesizing the Cultural Logic

The eastward spread of Western learning and the sinicization of Marxism constitute not isolated historical phenomena but interwoven manifestations of a persistent cultural logic. This logic prioritizes functional intelligibility over literal fidelity, ensuring imported ideas are rendered operationally meaningful within local epistemic frameworks. It privileges historical resonance over doctrinal purity, anchoring foreign concepts in indigenous temporal narratives and experiential continuities. It further sustains collective coherence over individual interpretation, orienting theoretical adaptation toward shared sociopolitical ends rather than hermeneutic pluralism. Such logic operates as a structural grammar---unspoken yet operative---mediating translation, appropriation, and reinvention across centuries. Its endurance reveals how intellectual transmission functions less as passive reception and more as active, context-sensitive reconstruction. This synthesis affirms that cultural transformation proceeds not through rupture but through calibrated recalibration.

7.2. Beyond Reception Theory

Framing the Eastward spread of Western learning and the Sinicization of Marxism as mere "reception" fundamentally mischaracterizes their epistemic status. These are not passive importations but rigorous, historically situated acts of theoretical labor---deliberate reconstructions that generate novel conceptual architectures. Such processes yield autonomous explanatory frameworks, internally coherent and responsive to local

material conditions, historical trajectories, and philosophical inheritances. They entail active translation, critical refraction, and systematic rearticulation---not assimilation into preexisting Western paradigms. The resulting configurations possess independent analytical purchase, capable of diagnosing social formations and guiding praxis without ontological subordination. This generative dimension underscores theory's constitutive role in historical agency, displacing reception models that obscure intellectual sovereignty and dialectical innovation. Understanding them thus demands a paradigm shift---from transmission to transformation, from borrowing to building.

7.3. Implications for Comparative Intellectual History

This perspective reframes comparative intellectual history by foregrounding structural regularities in knowledge migration across civilizational boundaries. Rather than imposing universal developmental schemas or privileging ideological fidelity, it identifies recurrent patterns---such as translation asymmetry, institutional mediation, and conceptual repurposing---that operate irrespective of doctrinal content or governance form. Such features constitute a transhistorical grammar of epistemic transfer, enabling rigorous comparison between seemingly disparate cases: the reception of Aristotelian logic in Tang China, Buddhist doctrines in medieval Japan, or Enlightenment science in nineteenth-century Korea. By isolating these invariant mechanisms, scholars avoid both relativist fragmentation and homogenizing abstraction. The result is a methodologically grounded framework for analyzing how foreign ideas acquire local intelligibility---not through passive adoption or radical distortion, but through structured, context-sensitive transformation. This approach advances historiography beyond binary oppositions of authenticity versus hybridity.

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