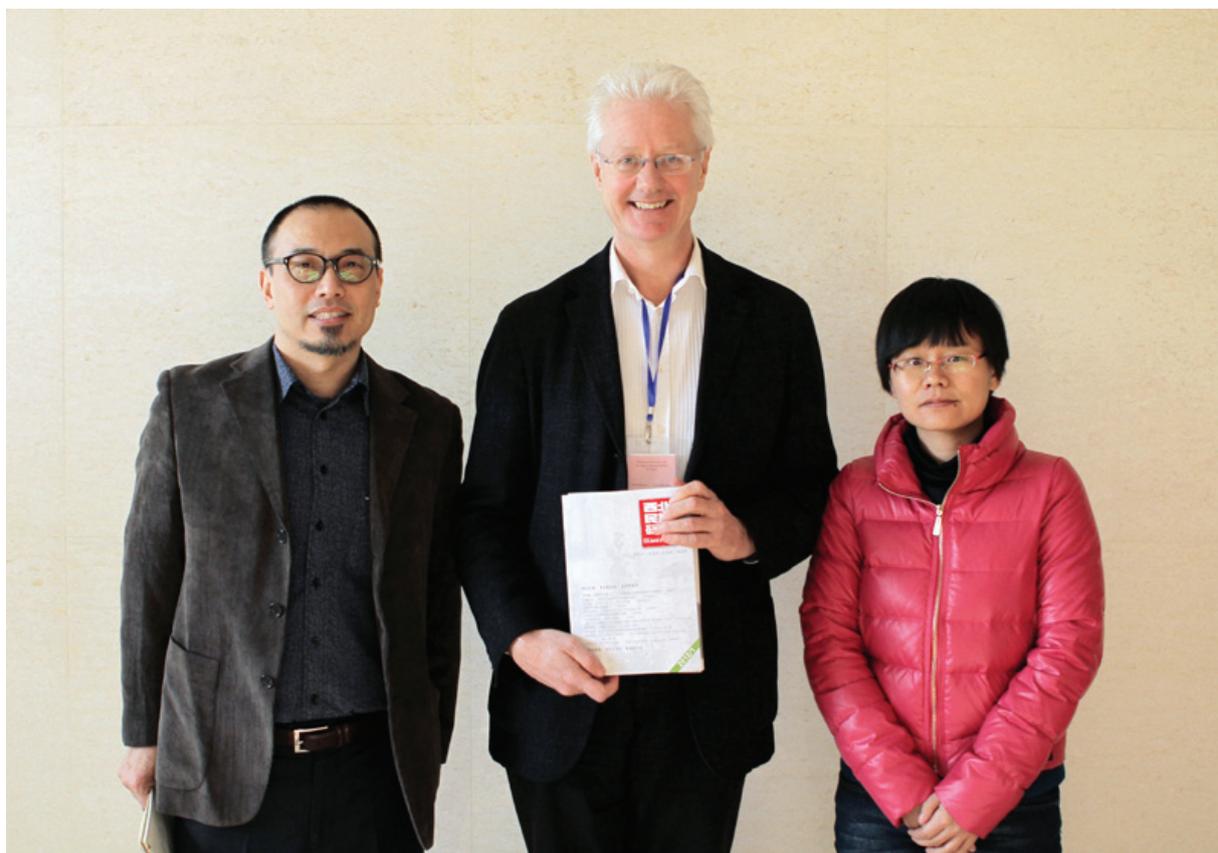


Peter van der Veer “Spirituality in Modern Society” [现代社会中的灵性], *Northwestern Journal of Ethnology*, No.75, Spring 2012, pp.115-124. Translation editor: Dan Smyer Yu; Translator: Liang Yan

Abstract

The argument of this paper is that the spiritual and the secular are produced simultaneously as two connected alternatives to institutionalized religion in Euro-American modernity. The paper also argues that a central contradiction in the concept of spirituality is that it is at the same time seen as universal and as tied to conceptions of national identity. Moreover, while the concept travels globally, its trajectory differs from place to place as it is inserted in different historical developments. The focus of the paper is on India and China in recognition of the fact that Indian and Chinese modernities are a product of interactions with imperial modernity. The relative success of “spirituality” in India and its relative failure in China cannot merely be explained by the rise of communism in China. More deeply it is the conviction that Chinese traditions had to be replaced by Western science that has characterized Chinese modernity long before the Communist take-over, while in India traditions were made into resources in the anti-imperialist struggle against a material modernization that culturally and politically subjected India to Western power.



Peter van der Veer with Dr. Man Ke, Editor of *NW Journal of Ethnology* and Dr. Dan Smyer Yu (MPI), translation editor of his “Spirituality in Modern Society”, Beijing, March 2012