



蔣經國國際學術交流基金會

The Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation  
for International Scholarly Exchange

# C.C.K. NEWSLETTER

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## CCK CELEBRATES TENTH ANNIVERSARY

Established in 1989, the Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation for International Scholarly Exchange celebrates its 10th anniversary this year. The celebration activities are taking place in three locations in three continents: Taipei in January, Prague in February, and Washington D.C. On January 7, a reception was held in the National Central Library followed by a lecture by Professor Jonathan Spence of Yale University. The topic of the lecture was "Lessons for the West: the Long View". Around two hundred people including Board members, scholars, foreign dignitaries and CCK grantees attended the ceremony in Taipei. Board member Dr. Lien Chen, Vice-President of the Republic of China, and Dr. Yu Kuo-hwa, Chairman of the Board, welcomed the guests and expressed the Foundation's gratitude for the support from the academic communities around the world.

The celebration in Prague took place at Charles University in February. There was a book exhibition and Professor Yih-yuan Li, President of the CCK Foundation, and Professor Goran Malmqvist gave lectures. Professor Li spoke on "The Folk Culture Foundation of Chinese Civilization" and Professor Malmqvist lectured on "The Development of Modern Poetry in Taiwan".

In April, with the collaboration of the Association of Asian Studies, a book exhibition and Panel Discussions on various subjects related to Chinese Studies are to be held in Washington D.C. Subjects to be discussed include: 1. New Developments in Chinese Archaeology;



Guests attending the Foundation's 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary in Taipei



Scholars attending the Foundation's ceremony in Prague

2. Chinese Influence on Global Civilization; 3. Susceptibility of Chinese Culture to Absorb Influences from the West; 4. Emerging Trends in Chinese Religion; 5. Chinese Studies Undergraduate Curriculum on CD-Rom.

These events mark the beginning of the second decade of CCK's global operation. Since its inception 10 years ago, the Foundation has provided steady support for researchers and has endeavored to develop a wider scope of Chinese Studies program for institutes. At the threshold of the 21st century, the Foundation not only strives to play a key role in the academic community, but also contemplates its direction in the future in order to enhance the understanding of Chinese people and its culture.

## 171 GRANT APPLICATIONS RECEIVED IN 1998

In 1998, the Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation for International Scholarly Exchange received 171 proposals for grant applications, excluding graduate and post-doctoral fellowship applications. The 171 applications were received from the following regions: 83 applications from America, 21 from the Domestic region, 34 from Europe, and 33 from the Asia/Pacific region.

Among the applications from America, 10 proposals were Institutional Enhancements (IE), 44 were Research Grants (RG), 3 were in the category of Conferences/Seminars (CS), 5 were Subsidies for Publications (SP), 11 were Senior Scholar Grants (SS), 7 were Travel Grants (TG) and 3 were Walter Judd Scholarships (WJ) (See Chart 1).

Chart 1.  
American Applications:

Category	Applications
IE	10
RG	44
CS	3
SP	5
SS	11
TG	7
WJ	3
TOTAL	83

The 34 Applications from Europe included 6 proposals in the IE category, 19 RG proposals, 7 Conference/Seminar proposals, and 2 Subsidies for Publication. There were 10 projects from Germany, 6 from the United Kingdom, 6 from France, 4 from Italy, 2 from Spain, and one project each from Denmark and Finland (See Chart 2&3).

Chart 2.  
European Applications According to Grant Category:

Category	Applications
IE	6
RG	19
CS	7
SP	2
TOTAL	34

Chart 3.  
European Applications According to Country:

Country	Applications
Germany	10
England	6
France	6
Russia	4
Italy	4
Spain	2
Denmark	1
Finland	1
TOTAL	34

The 21 applications from institutions and individuals in the R.O.C./Hong Kong included 11 Research Grant proposals, 3 Database proposals, 4 Conference/Seminar proposals, and 3 Subsidies for Publication (See Chart 4).

Chart 4.  
Domestic Applications:

Category	Applications
RG	11
DB	3
CS	4
SP	3
TOTAL	21

The 33 applications from the Asia/Pacific region included 9 IE proposals, 18 RG proposals, 4 CS proposals, and 2 SP applications. Among them, 17 applications were from Australia, 5 were from New Zealand, 2 proposals each were from Vietnam, the Philippines, Korea and Singapore, and 1 project each was from Israel, Jordan and India (See Chart 5&6).

Chart 5.  
Asia/Pacific Applications According to Grant Category:

Category	Applications
IE	9
RG	18
CS	4
SP	2
TOTAL	33

Chart 6.  
Asia/Pacific Applications According to Country:

Country	Applications
Australia	17
New Zealand	5
Vietnam	2
Philippines	2
Korea	2
Singapore	2
Israel	1
Jordan	1
India	1
TOTAL	33

After the applications have gone through the two-tier review process, the final results will be announced in May 1999.



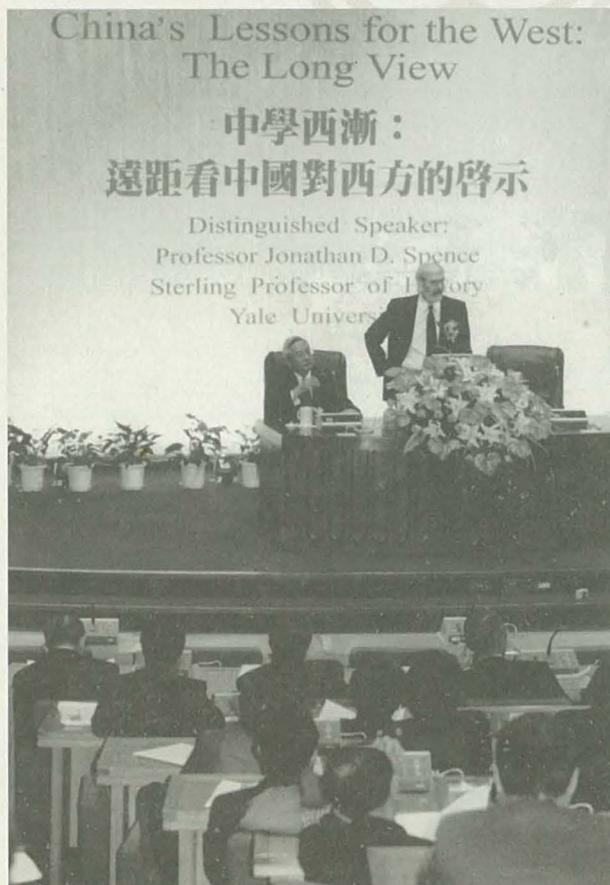
Professors Y.Y.Li (left), Malmqvist (middle) and Kral (right) in the book exhibition at Charles University

## "CHINA'S LESSONS FOR THE WEST : THE LONG VIEW"

by Professor Jonathan D. Spence

The Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation for International Scholarly Exchange is ten years old this year, and I am honored that Dr. Yih-yuan Li and the Board of Directors have asked me to speak on this occasion. In its comparatively short life this Foundation has helped hundreds of institutions, established scholars, and young PhD students -- among them some of our own from Yale -- with grants designed to broaden their scholarly range and depth. For this, I believe, the international scholarly world at large owes them thanks.

Though I am trapped in the melancholy knowledge that I will never be the kind of scholar of China that I would like to be, I suppose that I am at least eligible to speak for the members of that wider international world: as an Englishman raised in an intensive study of the Western literary and historical traditions, I began to study China when I traveled to the United States on an exchange fellowship in 1959, and was introduced to the field by Professors Arthur and Mary Wright. I then travelled to Australia, so that I could study Chinese historical sources of the Ch'ing dynasty with Dr. Fang Chao-ying, a teacher of truly astonishing knowledge and intensity, who inspired in me a profound respect for the rigors of Chinese traditional scholarship.



Professor J. Spence lectured on "China's Lessons for the West: The Long View"

Thence, after a spell in Tokyo and Kyoto, I came to Taiwan in the autumn of 1963 -- just after the assassination of President Kennedy -- to work on the holdings of Ch'ing dynasty palace memorials stored in the Palace Museum collection, which in those days were still in the vaults at Wu-feng, in the hills outside Taichung.

In the thirty-five years that have raced by since that time, it has always been axiomatic to me that China had lessons for me personally -- I found even in my clumsy attempts to study China a richness, resonance and complexity that kept me constantly alert and stimulated. Chinese culture to me possessed an inner unity even though it might be ravaged politically by massive fissures.

I cannot deny that this may sound strange coming from somebody who has devoted so much attention to the Ch'ing period, a period in which China was after all dominated by a peripheral power -- that of the Manchus -- who were themselves for much of the time at the thrall of aggressive powers from the West, or from Japan.

But in retrospect I feel that this made some sense: I was trying to learn my way into China with whatever guides I could find, rather the way many of the subtler and more flexible Manchus did. The K'ang-hsi emperor was a model for me here, and I admired his patience and his tenacity as he tried to find his intellectual moorings within the new world that fate and his ancestors had put at his disposal. Later, when I had the great good fortune to meet my future wife Chin Anping, I was led to a deeper understanding of the enormous scholarly contributions of her grandfather, Chin Yu-fu. It is an additional delight for me that she can be here today, together with my mother-in-law, Mrs. Tung-yun Su Chin. My education has also been enriched by almost a dozen students from Taiwan who have worked with me over the years at Yale, before returning to Taiwan as scholars and teachers. I am so happy some of them could be here today.

I would like to come back to some of those personal explorations of mine later in these remarks, but first I would like to explore "The Long View" that I mention in my title. Dr. Li invited me to reflect on the evaluation of Chinese Culture in "the perspective of contemporary global culture," and though that might seem to some people as an invitation to stay with our contemporary preoccupations, to a historian it is an irresistible chance to put the word "contemporary" itself into a longer term context, and to look at the wider range of perspectives and cultures (both in the plural) that the theme suggests.

Seven hundred years ago, the Venetian merchant-traveler Marco Polo had just finished dictating his

thoughts on China to his fellow prisoner in Genoa, the narrative romancer Rusticello. Controversy still flourishes around that moment, and about the accuracy of the text that emerged from that strange collaboration, but there is no doubt about the contemporaneity of the manuscript that came from it. There are several variant manuscript Polo texts from the first decade of the thirteenth-hundreds, and each of them tells substantially the same story.

From the perspective of that European medieval global culture, China was a focus of extraordinary power and authority, a place of hierarchy and discipline, with a massive population kept in line by effective laws and social restraints. It was also a focus for commerce on a mind-boggling scale, with convenient bulk trade by land, by sea, and on the multiplicity of rivers and canals that linked the populous walled and carefully patrolled cities. There was paper money and letters of credit, and ingenious applications of technology such as porcelain and silk, the use of coal in heating, and the intricate engineering of bridges.

There were marvels too, of many kinds, but in the global context of Polo's mind a world without marvels would not have been a world that one could believe in. In geopolitical terms, Polo and his contemporaries sought to find in the Mongol empires of Asia a counterweight to the rising Muslim power in the middle east, hence their fascination with Mongol/Chinese military prowess. Intersected with this was the awareness that each side might be able to learn something from the other: hence Polo's boastfulness about the efficacy of Western siege engines in the Mongol attacks on Chinese cities, and the simultaneous dispatch of a Chinese emissary to Europe by Kublai Khan of the Yuan dynasty, in search of new texts and men of skill.

From the global perspective of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, China was firmly interlinked both with the long-range strategies of overseas expansion and with the Catholic church's counter-reformation attempts to make up for its losses to the forces of protestantism in Europe. China still had lessons to offer many Western observers, in terms of orderly governance, its provincial structure, its educated mandarin, and the impartial applications of its strict laws. Such reflections were even transmuted into fiction, as in the massive late sixteenth century novel *The Peregrinations* by the Portuguese soldier-writer Mendes Pinto. But as the Catholic Spaniards deepened their hold over Manila, and the Portuguese over Macao, both anxiously watched the growing expansionism of new protestant powers like the Dutch and the British, and did what they could to strengthen their own bases while also deepening the catholic presence within China itself.

The spearhead of this endeavor came through the Jesuits, who introduced a new element into the equation by making determined efforts to learn Chinese,



Professor Li lectured in Charles University

both the written and the spoken languages. Though Matteo Ricci (Li Ma-tou) is the most widely known inside China and out, there were many others who worked as hard as he did to come to grips with the complexities of the Chinese written tradition. Through their textual readings of the Four Books and of portions of the Confucian classics, they were the first to introduce into their own catholic cultural world -- which now included significant areas of South America and the West coast of India -- the idea of the intensity of Chinese intellectual exploration of certain key ethical ideas. Through translation, these Jesuit exegeses became swiftly available in Britain and the Netherlands, and in religiously divided France, where the study of China and the financing of new China missions were both well established by the late sixteen hundreds, in the mid-years of the K'ang-hsi reign.

Though the Jesuit goal in exploring Chinese culture was of course designed to speed their own attempts at conversion there, the wide dispersion of their intellectual findings spurred new waves of speculation in the rapidly expanding Western worlds of intellectual exploration. Two of these, though they took prodigious expenditures of intellectual energy, were dead-ends. One was the search for a "key" to the Chinese language, a "clavis sinica" which by the definition of certain grammatical and numerical formulae would place mastery of Chinese in the hands of any Westerners with the will to learn. Another was the intellectual school of enquiry known as "figurism," in which the Chinese classical writings were meticulously combed in the search for evidence that at some earlier stage of their culture the Chinese had shared in the knowledge of the one true God now worshipped by the Christians, and of the Messiah who would come to earth to prepare for the final judgement. Though these were dead-ends in their own terms, one might nevertheless argue that the first endeavors did prepare the way for later systematic handbooks for the learning of Chinese written language amongst Westerners, while the second introduced Westerners to the changes made in the nature and content of Chinese texts by the introduction of Buddhism into China, and by the editorial labors of Chu Hsi and his immediate precursors.

The third of the efforts -- the use of evidence drawn from China as a way to analyze the structures and values of Western thought -- was to have a more lasting and fundamental importance across the culture of the eighteenth century, when so much that we think of as fundamental to an emergent global civilization was taking shape. Such an idea had been implicit in many earlier writings about China, but was first rigorously formulated by the German mathematician and philosopher Leibniz. Leibniz believed that he could find in Chinese thought an antidote to the venom that had poisoned Europe through the wars of religion. He believed that in Confucian values one could discern a belief in intellectual balance and common sense that could be used to mediate between Western extremist points of view. Study of China and Chinese philosophy could be spread through the new royal academies that were being founded in many European states, and contact with China could be comparatively easily maintained by the land route across Russia, the rapid expansion of which had brought it to China's northern frontiers, and already led to the fruitful and central diplomatic accord with China known as the Treaty of Nerchinsk (1689).

China's skill in mathematics, as manifested in the organization of the hexagrams in the Book of Changes, also seemed to Leibniz to prefigure some of his own explorations in the field of binary arithmetic. It was thus no great step for Leibniz, though an important one for Europe, that he should suggest the advisability of having some Confucian teachers come to Europe, rather than expending such effort on sending Western missionaries to China. The rapid expansion of this idea throughout the Europe of the enlightenment is comparatively well-known, and I won't dwell on it here, except to say that though this concept is usually linked to French thinkers like Voltaire, it could also be influentially found in widely-selling British fictional writers, such as Oliver Goldsmith. His epistolary novel of 1762, *The Citizen of the World*, is as much an encomium to the common sense and intelligence of the Chinese as it is a critique of his own society, and of those within it who tried to analyze away Chinese achievements through inadequately based generalizations. Goldsmith's phrase for this procedure -- he called it "reasoning the Chinese out of their own country" -- seems to me an admirably pithy piece of intellectual commentary.

Lessons can be negative, of course, as well as positive, and the former can grow out of the latter. The medieval and expansionist European analyzes of China's political power, commercial energies, and intellectual pragmatism all held within themselves the seeds of their own opposites -- political power can be viewed as absolutism; commercial energies can be redefined as greed and dishonesty, intellectual pragmatism can be viewed as a cover for vacuousness. The possibilities of such substitutions had always coexisted, and it would not be hard to produce various earlier examples. But as the eighteenth century advanced through ideas of enlightenment into the harshly visionary concepts of revo-

lution in France, and of massive industrial growth and economic transformation in Britain, the negative connotations of the Chinese experience found their own place within the Western world view. China's determination to preserve its own autonomy in the commercial and diplomatic fields was viewed by the Western powers with increasing hostility -- a trajectory one can track across the century through the writings of Daniel Defoe, Commodore Anson, and Lord Macartney's account of his experiences at the court of emperor Ch'ien-lung. The dismissal of Chinese intellectual pragmatism, and the aesthetic culture that had appeared to go with it, can be seen in a host of anti-Chinoiserie parodies, as well as in the philosophical writings of Herder, or the cultural reflections of Goethe.

Most importantly, the weaknesses inherent in Chinese traditional concepts of state power were analyzed with a fierce new rigor by Montesquieu, in his immensely learned and contemporaneously persuasive masterpiece of analytical scholarship, *The Spirit of the Laws*. Though he drew on many strands of other people's thoughts, Montesquieu was the first to condense the arguments about China in universalist terms of human freedom. The more he studied the obedience and the good behavior of the Chinese, the more he looked at the power of the court and the discipline of the bureaucrats, the less signs of genuine human freedom he saw. The willingness to abide by the law, as Montesquieu saw it, could come from genuine application of reason, or from the unreasoning motivations of fear of punishment. The study of comparative cultures seemed to Montesquieu to be centered around the ways that governments allowed different levels within each society to express their wills, despite the fact that such expression was always subject to modification due to dictates of climate, geography and environment. But by whatever standards it was measured, China in the last resort was a society in which one man only was free, and all others lived with the realities -- and occasional awareness -- of their perpetually servile status. The forms of homage to the ruler, the place of women within the society, the brutality of the public punishments, were all the offshoots of this central premise.

Aspects of Montesquieu's thinking obviously made their way into Lord Macartney's views of China, and affected his thinking about the country and its rulers. They also affected Adam Smith's views of the initial causes and subsequent growth or curb of the wealth of nations. Perhaps more significantly, they deeply influenced Hegel, and his conclusion that China was somehow trapped outside the central movement of western history, which was propelling European nations towards a growing notion of spirit and of freedom. Trapped thus "in the infancy of the world," untouched by the spiritual and political changes that informed the Greco-Roman, medieval, and post-Renaissance world, China would only enter the main stream of world history when "compelled" to do so by the West. It was not a great jump from this to the formulations of Karl Marx on the "Asiatic

Mode of Production" and the corresponding conclusion by Marx that only the destructive forces of Western capitalism would have the strength to weaken the restrictive bonds of oriental despotism, and give China a chance to enter the main currents of world change and revolution.

Amidst the harsh experiences of the nineteenth century in China, in which the weakened Ch'ing regime were forced to yield concession after concession to the West, there seemed little inclination for the West to find lessons in China. The Ch'ing rulers, scholars, and common people had little defensive response save outright xenophobia, or the compromise solution of the ti-yung formula which tried to hold fast to some inner Chinese cultural essence even while yielding the materialist ground to Western practical application. The movement of large numbers of Chinese to new work sites outside their country, especially to the western United States after the 1850s, to the gold fields and chances for labor on the railways, brought further negative impact: Chinese were now studied close-up in the most unappealing of environments, the newly founded "Chinatowns," where legal restrictions, economic deprivation, and a largely male population of sojourners, presented a picture of a strangeness that seemed without redeeming features.

Yet the idea of Chinese contributions to the west did not entirely vanish: the earlier records of China's effective civil service examinations were recalled and incorporated into the competitive exams for government service in many burgeoning democracies, where they seemed to offer a true promise of a career open to the talents. And the study of Chinese language itself advanced to completely new levels, urged forward not by the frail search for an elusive "key," but by the protestant missionaries' compilation of the first comprehensive dictionaries of Chinese and Western languages, and by the linguistic challenges of comprehensive Bible translation. These led in turn to the step that was to make a new level of Chinese incorporation into global culture possible, the accurate translation of the Five Classics into English, French, German, and other languages, along with a range of Taoist and some Buddhist texts. By the early twentieth century, French scholars were tackling Ssu-ma Ch'ien's Shih-chi, and new levels of sinological skill were being applied to the translations of Chinese T'ang and Sung poetry, to late Ming novels and drama, and to the attempt to classify painting and calligraphy in ways that would make their appreciation easier to Western audiences.

One could argue, I believe, that in the decade that followed the collapse of the Ch'ing dynasty in 1912, there was a renewed willingness in the West to think well of China. This came despite -- or indeed perhaps because of -- the catastrophic impact on Western cultural and political self-esteem of the hideous violence and loss of life that accompanied World War I. Liang Ch'i-ch'ao sensed this breaking-point clearly during his

own visit to Europe in 1919. If ever there had been a need for a Leibnizian type of cultural reenrichment, in which aspects of China's values might reinvigorate and exhausted West, it was then, as Oswald Spengler suggested, at least in part, in his Decline of the West. But the single most colossal paradox in modern Chinese history is that it was at precisely this moment that Chinese embarked on their most determined quest ever to junk a sizeable part of their cultural inheritance, and to seek for replacements from amongst the multitudinous fragments of the West. "May Fourth Iconoclasm" was perhaps an inevitable part of China's own cultural despair, but it came at a time when the West had no unifying answer to offer. At exactly the same time, too, the inner weaknesses of China's new Republican system were fatally exposed by Yuan Shih-k'ai, and after the purge of Kuomintang parliamentarians, the rump membership of the old National Assembly were in no way prepared, politically or organizationally, to shore up the ruins. The two dominant alternatives became, therefore, the still largely untried nationalism of Dr. Sun Chung-shan, or the equally untried proletarian-oriented Marxism-Leninism of China's then minuscule communist party. Despite the initially hopeful rhetoric of the 1924 United Front, this was hopeless mix.

The 1920s and 1930s were nevertheless the period that brought Chinese aesthetic values more sharply into focus for the West. This was not only because of the translation labors already alluded to, but also because of the assembling of major collections of Chinese art in European and American museums, and the serious engagements of some artists with Chinese artistic forms -- one can think of examples as varied as Claudel's prose poems, Ezra Pound's early cantos, some of Debussy's music, and the plays of Bertolt Brecht. In the political sphere, the intense struggles within China to find some feasible way to withstand Japanese aggression aroused a new international awareness of the possible strength of Chinese nationalism, as well as sharpening the debate over what the logical geographical and cultural parameters of the Chinese polity should be. While some lauded Chiang Chieh-shih's attempts to eradicate the communist threat before turning the nation's attentions against Japan, others saw in the Chinese communists' organizational experimentation -- especially after they had been able to reconsolidate in Yen-an after 1937 -- a hopeful sign for a different form of social structure in impoverished rural areas. To such observers, Yen-an was thus a continuation of a struggle that had begun in 1936 in the Spanish Civil War, and the integrity of its struggle was not to be challenged. It was not always easy for the post-1938 nationalist regime in Chungking to counter such arguments, however much they pressed for their own priorities in the war's conduct.

Fifty-five years after that War's end, Chinese civilization has reasserted a significant presence in the overall pattern of global culture. I feel confident in asserting that, though it is by no means easy to be precise

about such a statement. In the first place, what China are we talking about? The China of Taiwan offers one kind of answer, with the energy of its economic engine, its remarkable skills in traditional scholarship and in all facets of current western aesthetics and culture, and its stunning entry into the ranks of democratic societies. This is a China that has adapted with flexibility to a bewildering mass of challenges, and the world watches to see if the mainland government is willing to learn anything from the example, as it struggles with its own immensely complex problems, spread across an almost unimaginably larger scale. There is the China of Hong Kong, with its own searches for economic and personal viability under British dominance, now forced to readjust to a different set of compromises and economic possibilities. There is the China of the diaspora, not just in the United States and Canada, but world wide, from New Zealand to Scandinavia. What are the promises and possibilities here, in the series of bonds that apparently can transcend language, native place, cultural knowledge? And of course where is China on the Mainland, in which places or classes, in the communist party or in the academy, in the streets or the farms or the factories, among the young or the old, the newly rich or the desperate city migrants?

For me, if I may attempt a stab at an answer, our need now is for a renewed appreciation for Chinese civilization that is rooted strongly in the past, and at the same time can be used to enrich our sense of the present. All the changes in economic opportunities and health care and speed of communication have not brought people any more wisdom, nor do I believe that they will ever do so. People may be better informed because of an information revolution, but they will only become wiser by thinking more rigorously, and being intelligently aware of the widest possible spectrum of alternate views and interpretations.

There is no better way to understand this than to think of the dazzling range of views about life and its living presented by Chinese thinkers during the Warring States period, and again during the Six Dynasties. In such periods, quite apart from the power or the reach of the state, one can see the human mind at work in all its dazzling play and intensity. Instead of seeking priority for this civilization or that, the rest of the world needs to know Confucius and Mencius, Hsun-tzu and Chuang-tzu, as well as Wang Pi and Hui-yuan, Hsi K'ang, Juan Chi and T'ao Yuan-ming, not as simplified slogans for a political point of view, but as sophisticated masters of enquiry, who have the power to open our horizons. There are few things more pointless than the arguments for or against Western civilization that rage in many American campuses. Obviously there are treasured components in such a civilization, and moments of piercing achievement. But there are no such moments that can not be enriched by a sense of complementarity with other seekers in other societies, and earlier Chinese thought is exquisitely rich in range. It is merely an additional bonus of our own time that the new

archaeological finds in Hupei and Hunan (the heartland of the ancient state of Ch'u) have given us such a plenitude of variant and datable texts against which to measure the accepted wisdom of past versions and their commentaries.

There are so many other examples of particularly Chinese lessons that we could use in the present. We could consider the mental and manual skills demanded by Chinese calligraphy, the value given over such long periods of time to collecting and collating, the roles of rituals in social department and in the search for order, the question of balance within a wider community, and of how to keep integrity in compromised situations. Our time today does not let us explore all of these!



Book exhibition in Charles University, Prague

To return to the personal thought that I mentioned at the beginning of my remarks, I can see my own work on China as always changing in focus, but with the constant underlying goal of trying to learn from China's past experiences something about the human family in general. Very often this has turned out to be a cross-cultural enquiry, and sometimes one with an embedded paradox. The paradox can spring from Christianity: Matteo Ricci, for all his labors with Chinese language and his versatility in introducing Western cultural and scientific concepts, created a series of compromises with Chinese religious concepts that ultimately undercut the entire Chinese catholic mission; John Hu, dispatched in 1721 from Canton to France to help the Jesuits introduce their library of Chinese books to Europe, was unwilling or unable to do any of the work he was told to do, and after attempting to literalize the idea of Christian service and poverty in the streets of Paris was consigned to an insane asylum by the French police; Hung Hsiu-ch'uan, small town school teacher and unsuccessful examination taker, was lured to Christianity by missionaries who refused to baptize him. The Taiping "heavenly kingdom" he created in response caused unprecedented destruction, and laid waste great areas of central China for a generation or more. At the level of personal paradox, a ruler as powerful and adaptable as K'ang-hsi could devote his energies in turn to suppressing the San-fan rebellion, conquering Taiwan, facing-

down the Russians, conquering the Uighurs, and bringing Chinese troops into Tibet, but was totally unable to deal with his own children. A woman named Wang, in a small Shantung village in 1672, without money and without recourse after she tried to flee her home with a lover, was murdered by her husband, only to achieve at last in death her power to dominate her community.

I have been fascinated at different times by all these stories, and see in them something that is both totally Chinese and wholly mine. I try to let the texts tell me where to go, not to bully them to follow some directions already in my head or my heart. I am now totally absorbed by the struggle between emperor Yung-cheng and the Hunanese scholar Tseng Ching, who sought to kill his ruler. Both emperor and scholar knew they were right, and would even justify that conviction by citing the same texts, and invoking the same traditions from China's past. Having proven Tseng Ching's treason beyond all doubt, and forced him to write a full and abject confession, the Ta-i chueh-mi lu, the Yung-cheng emperor pardoned Tseng absolutely, gave him a job, and a stipend to go with it. The moment Yung-cheng died, his filial son Ch'ien-lung reversed everything his father had done, and killed Tseng.

As I have been exploring this story, I find that it leads out in all directions across Chinese society, from Yunnan and Szechwan to Shensi and Shansi, from Hunan to Chekiang, Kwangtung and Taiwan. It involves boatmen and chin-shih scholars, merchants and doctors, bannermen, jailers and convicts, emperors, princes, eunuchs. Its themes are loyalty and deceit, generosity and cruelty, the highest scholarship and popular rumor-mongering. Once again, I hope I can catch something of China in Chinese terms, but also something that will make non-Chinese sigh and shake their heads -- not in disbelief, but in recognition.

Historians are often looking for the phrase that might justify them to themselves, and perhaps to their long-suffering families and friends. For me, one such phrase of exhortation is that of Lieh-tzu (even though he was scolded for it by his own teacher): "Other men travel in order to see what there is to see, but I travel in order to observe how things change." It is in this sense that China has become, for me, my own particular mirror. And yet in my heart, I fear that even as I speak you are silently murmuring about me and my ambitions the words that the redoubtable Hsun-tzu applied to the Mohists: "When they talk of the Tao, they are like blind men distinguishing between white and black, like deaf men responding to the musical pitches, like one who in trying to get to Ch'u heads straight up towards the north!"

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