

CHINESE STUDIES

JOHN C. FERGUSON

IT IS OF PRIMARY importance to remember that the Chinese language, both written and spoken, is a living one, never more full of vitality than at the present time. In its various dialects it is spoken by more persons than any other language—approximately by one-third of the human race. Of this large number about three-quarters can understand each other with varying degrees of readiness when brought face to face and the remaining one-quarter easily learn to acquire such adaptations as are necessary to make themselves understood in dialects which differ from their own speech. A person from Canton arriving in Peiping for the first time cannot understand what he hears or make himself understood, but with patient study for a few days he acquires enough phrases to express his ordinary daily needs. It must be remembered, however, that he learns to adapt his speech to new pronunciations much more quickly than a foreigner who begins to study Chinese for the first time can acquire the same number of phrases. With him it is only a change of sounds, or often of words, in an unfamiliar aspect of his own language; with the foreigner it is entirely a new language. If the person from Canton is able to write his own language he finds it easy to explain his needs, for the written word is the same in all parts of China.

Throughout the variations of pronunciation in the dialects of Chekiang, Fukien, and Canton provinces there runs an idiom of speech similar to that found in the dialects of central and northern China which are generally grouped together under the head of "mandarin." Mandarin is a term coined to translate the two words *kuan hua*, but, in my opinion, it is a poor translation, for *kuan hua* really means the standard language of China which officials were expected to be able to use so that irrespective of their place of birth they would be able to communicate with each other in the transaction of public business. It was more than a court or official language; it was the language of public affairs. The term *kuan hua* should therefore be translated as the "standard language" in the same sense as this term is used in speaking of English as a standard language throughout the British Isles. *Kuan hua* is the standard language of China whether spoken with the dialectal pronunciation of Peiping.

Shantung, Nanking, Hunan, or Ssüch'uan, or with the strong accent of persons from Fukien or Canton provinces.

The *Ho-fei* pronunciation of words was retained by Li Hung-chang as long as he lived and that of the Pao-ch'ing district in Hunan province by Liu K'un-yi. Chang Chih-tung pronounced his words like the people of the southern part of Hopei (Chihli) while Tuan Fang spoke pure Pekingese. Wu Ting-fang could be recognized in his first sentence as a Cantonese even though when speaking English it would have been difficult to have recognized his voice or his pronunciation as not being to the manner born. K'ang Yu-wei and Liang Ch'i-ch'ao both spoke with a strong Cantonese accent whereas T'ang Shao-yi's language is almost free of it. And yet in spite of marked differences in pronunciation all of these men could have understood each other without difficulty if they had met together for the discussion of public affairs. The idiom of their speech was the same even though individual words were pronounced with many variations. At the present time the Wu-Yüeh group of languages, centering upon Shanghai and Hangchow is having a strong influence upon the pronunciation of the standard language and the drift is away from the Peking sounds as transliterated by Wade and Giles which can no longer be considered as the definitive criteria for the correctness of pronunciation of the standard language.

Chinese being a living language, it is obvious that the first step to be taken in Chinese studies is to learn to speak it. One must also, of course, learn to read and write it, but the first and most important thing is the ability to speak the standard language. It is true that one may learn to read and write Chinese without being able to speak it, but such persons have the handicap of the deaf and dumb, while those who can only speak are like the blind in any country. A healthy development in the acquisition of Chinese, or of any living language, follows the same methods as the child who first learns to speak, then to read, and finally to write. There are a few adult scholars in the West who can read Chinese but have never learned to speak it. While due praise must be given to such persons for their patient industry they cannot be accepted as models. They must have done the best that lay in their power but they have lost the most necessary preparation for their work by the lack of being able to speak. This lack makes impossible discussion with Chinese who only speak their own language and throws one back on the necessity of self-tutoring

or of dependence upon teachers who speak one's own foreign language.

Fortunately there is at the present time a group of young Chinese scholars who have studied in foreign countries and are able to use one or more foreign languages with fluency. The largest proportion of these scholars use the English language and the others are divided among those speaking Japanese, French, or German. These scholars labor under a handicap similar to that of foreign scholars, for, in proportion to the number of years that they have devoted to foreign studies and the amount of time they devote to current literature in foreign languages, they are obliged to sacrifice time which scholars who use no foreign language can devote to research. This handicap does not apply, of course, to scientific studies where familiarity with some foreign language is still a *sine qua non*, but only to literary subjects. In one respect such foreign-language-speaking Chinese have an advantage over Chinese-speaking foreigners in that they begin the study of a foreign language when they are very young, usually in their teens, with the result that they are able to use it more easily than foreign scholars use the Chinese language. However, it is as true now as it has ever been that the best scholars, those whose opinions are authoritative, in literary subjects such as philosophy, belles lettres, history, the fine arts, are not familiar with any foreign language, although they are being profoundly influenced by the modern methods employed by their foreign-language-speaking contemporaries, for it is in methodology that the greatest influence of the new education is being felt in old literary circles. Gradually this influence is bound to permeate and irradiate the whole mass of Chinese literary studies and as this process develops, the urge for studies outside of their own country in some foreign language will diminish. Foreign-language-speaking Chinese scholars have probably already reached the zenith of their influence and in future years, as in the years before foreign intercourse made knowledge of other languages desirable, scholarship in literary subjects will continue to remain in the hands of Chinese who are unable to use any foreign language.

It is to establishing contact with this class that Chinese studies on the part of foreigners should be directed and this can only be done effectively by the ability to carry on an intelligible conversation. We must have some scholars who can talk to Chinese scholars in

their own language, and in order to be able to do so such scholars must come to China to learn the use of the standard language. While learning to speak they can also learn to read and to write. This study should commence at as young an age as possible, say by youths of fourteen or fifteen years. Such youths could then take their college courses in some college in China and later could undertake post-graduate work for a term of years. Not less than ten years of continuous preliminary study should be undertaken by any one who in future intends to make a specialty in Chinese literary subjects. Our present practice is to begin the study of the Chinese language at the age of twenty or thirty after graduation from college and frequently after post-graduate studies have been completed. It must be recognized that under this system sound scholarship is possible only to exceptional persons among those who thus commence their studies in adult life. There is fortunately still a place for these half-educated persons who speak with a strong foreign accent, read with difficulty or with mispronunciation of characters and are not able to write at all, even though their usefulness is being steadily undermined by half-educated Chinese who can use some foreign language better than the foreigner can use Chinese. But in the future the value of this class will rapidly decrease, and only those who have a thorough mastery of the spoken and written language of China will be qualified for the title of sinologues.

There will still remain in foreign centers of education an urgent need of persons with a superficial knowledge of the Chinese language or even with no knowledge of it but who are familiar with what has been translated. All of our large universities should have departments of East Asiatic Languages in which students can become familiar with the literature, history, religion, and art of the Far East. Such departments can be of great value in disseminating general knowledge, but each of them should have at least one well-trained scholar of the type described in the preceding paragraph who can speak, read, and write Chinese and who is thus qualified to act as a liaison between the other members of the faculty and the scholars of China. If this department has also some other members who can read Chinese or Japanese sufficiently well to make translations from original sources it will be fortunate. It must be emphasized, however, that such departments will not be qualified to undertake research work in competition with Chinese scholars. Foreign schol-

ars with the best possible training will have their time fully occupied in keeping their nationals acquainted with the results of researches carried on by their better-equipped Chinese colleagues. The sinologue of the future will be a transmitter and not an originator. In fact the only work of foreign scholars down to the present time which gives promise of survival is their translation of Chinese texts with accompanying explanatory notes.

For the present it will be necessary to do the best thing possible by encouraging college graduates or post-graduate students to come to China for a period of three or five years to acquire as much of the language and literature as is possible in that limited time. On their return they will be qualified for positions in the faculty of an East Asiatic department, in libraries of oriental books or as curators in museums. In such positions they will be able to do valuable work as long as too much is not expected of them, even though they will probably find that their knowledge both of spoken and written Chinese gradually dwindles. They will always remain qualified to encourage others in the pursuit of knowledge of oriental matters. Worthy as this group is already proving itself to be we should be unfaithful to the high ideals of our western scholarship if we were content with their achievements. We must aim higher and try to produce scholars who can speak, read, and write Chinese on the same level as, even if inferior to, that of the scholars of this country.

The place to study the Japanese language is in Japan, as China is the place to study Chinese. Even the great scholars of the neighboring country of Japan who are noted for their achievements in Chinese literature all studied in China. Hattori who became a Professor at Harvard spent several years as a student in China and after his return from Germany was a teacher in the Peking National University. Naito, whose death this year is greatly lamented, lived many years in Peking and had many friends among Chinese scholars. Ichimura, an authority on Taoism, made many trips to China, and Kuwabara, who has studied the relations of China with the outside world, spent two years here in special studies. These scholars were all able to speak, read, and write Chinese but they acquired their proficiency chiefly in China. They had been familiar from childhood with the Chinese characters used in Japanese books but all felt the necessity of completing their Chinese studies in China itself. These men are used as examples for the students of other

countries more widely separated from China than Japan is. If with their background they found it advisable to come to China, how much more do students in America and England need to come here even though preliminary studies may be carried on in Harvard, Paris, or London. It may be taken as a safe rule that persons who intend to spend their lives in Chinese studies should, if possible, receive their training in China. One may study French in London if he cannot go to Paris, but it would be absurd for him to choose to do so. One may study Chinese in Paris or Tokyo, but this is also absurd if one can afford to study it in China. We have good French and Japanese savants in Chinese studies but it is not invidious to say that they are not the equals of Chinese scholars.

In my opinion the time spent by some foreign scholars in attempts to reconstruct the ancient life of China or to decipher inscriptions or to make new interpretations of disputed texts could be spent much more profitably in acquiring a better knowledge of the Chinese language itself. With this equipment many of their dissertations would become unnecessary and futile. Our systematic methods which have grown out of our devotion to science enable us to make a decided contribution to Chinese studies, but this is a triumph of our methodology and not of our superior scholarship in Chinese literature. The two should not be confused as is not infrequently the case. China will always remain the best interpreter of her own literature and the future task of foreign scholars will be the acquisition of a mastery of the spoken and written language sufficient to enable them to understand and appreciate the interpretation. The best models for foreign scholars in future years are men like Li Yen-shêng of the T'ang dynasty or P'u Shou-ch'êng of the Sung who though of foreign extraction learned Chinese sufficiently well to be admitted to the exclusive ranks of recognized scholars just as Joseph Castiglione has conferred distinction upon his generation by being recognized as a worthy member in the list of Chinese painters.

BOOK NOTES

The Pawnee Ghost Dance and Hand Game, A Study of Cultural Change. By Alexander Lesser. New York. Columbia University Press. \$4.00.

This book is not merely a full and detailed description of the Ghost Dance and Hand Game revival among the Pawnees in 1892 and following years; but it also describes, drawn against an historical background, the changes when the significance of their culture had been destroyed which took place in the beliefs, the customs, and the manner of living of these Indians when contact with a culture on a different level which was forced upon them not in its entirety, but in certain superficial externals which could not replace the essential values of their life. With the revival of the Ghost Dance came a renaissance of culture and a return of hope into the idle lives of the Indians. The development of the Hand Game in connection with it shows the change of a gambling game into a complex religious ritual.

Culture Areas of Nigeria. By Wilfred D. Hambly. Assistant Curator of African Ethnology. Field Museum of Natural History Publication 346. Anthropological Series. Volume XXI. No. 3. Chicago, 1935.

This is the third of the series of Mr. Hambly's reports on his researches and expedition as leader of the Frederick W. Rawson-Field Museum Ethnological Expedition to West Africa in 1929-30. Here he has made a special study of the culture areas of Nigeria showing how they are influenced by climate and by geographical factors, how migrations have brought in innovations, and blended with the indigenous culture, with a description of the industries of Nigeria, brass casting, iron work, spinning, weaving, and dyeing, basketry, pottery, glass making, silver ornaments, and wood carving, etc. Historical and geographical material are introduced to explain the distribution of the various types of culture and the changes brought about by the interference of foreign influence on the old manner of life.

The Church, Catholic and Protestant, A Study of Differences that Matter. By William Adams. 1935. Charles Scribners' Sons. New York. \$2.75.

A plea, pointing to a solution, for Catholics and Protestants to emphasize not their differences, but their common Christianity, the Bible, and aspirations to give the Church greater power to maintain its superiority in the world against rival creeds and indifference. Loyalty and devotion must be more intense for the Church is what its individual members make it; and the support of the young people depends, not on a promise of security and ease, but upon a cause which will demand their all.

Speaking of Religion. By Bruce Curry. 1935. Charles Scribners' Sons. New York. Price \$1.50.

A message to guide intelligent men and women to a new understanding of the meaning and worth of Christianity as a way to meet life. The author meets the present-day challenge to Christianity by differentiating between good and bad in religion, expanding on a high religion in which the best is brought together to make an adequate philosophy of life without which no society or civilization can exist.

A Witness Through the Centuries. By Dr. Reginald Hegy. 1935. E. P. Dutton. New York. Price \$2.00.

A record of the extraordinary experiences of a medical doctor of messages from spirits to a small group of friends, which convinced him of higher spiritual worlds and life after death.

The Secret Path. A Technique of Spiritual Self-Discovery for the Modern World. By Paul Brunton. 1935. E. P. Dutton. New York. \$2.00.

The author feels that at this time the combination of the wisdom of the East with the accomplishments of the West is what our troubled world needs most. In this book he has given a practical example in a method for meditation adapted to the life of a busy man of today.

RELIGION WITHIN THE LIMITS OF REASON ALONE

By IMMANUEL KANT

Translated with an Introduction and Notes by

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Kant's *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone* serves, more than any of his other writings, to round out the philosophical system which he developed in the three *Critiques*. In it Kant examines the nature and significance of the religious experience, devoting special attention to the tenets and practices of Christianity, which he interprets with sympathy and originality.

In many respects Kant was a typical eighteenth-century thinker; but he was also a critic of his times. The *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone* is a classic exposition of eighteenth-century deism and humanism at their best, revealing both their elements of strength and their limitations. Today, with deism and humanism widespread in England and America, it is peculiarly appropriate that a translation of Kant's important work should be made available. (No English translation has appeared since Semple's inadequate translation of 1838.) The book not only gives lucid and forceful expression to a significant aspect of the modern temper, but reveals its superficiality on many points and suggests a more profound approach to some of its problems.

Professor Greene's Introduction contains a survey of the eighteenth-century pietism and deism in Germany, a description of Kant's religious background and training, and a summary of those doctrines in the three *Critiques* which constitute the philosophical basis for his religious theory. The book will be of value not only to scholars of the Kantian philosophy but to less advanced students of Kant's ethical and religious ideas. It is suitable for class use in colleges, universities and theological seminaries.

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