NORTHWEST CHINA COUNCIL NEWSLETTER

#10, July — September, 1983

SPENCE ON CATHOLICS AND CONFUCIANS IN 16TH CENTURY CHINA

If the philosopher Leibnitz had had his way in the 17th century, Chinese ideographs would be the written form of a universal language, and the Western governments might be organized following the Confucian examination pattern.

Leibnitz' dreams of a universal written language and rule by a highly educated elite sprang from the earliest Sino-Western "cultural exchange", begun in the late 16th century by missionaries setting out to Christianize China.

China scholar Jonathan Spence spoke in Portland June 23 on the nature of those early exchanges, particularly as they were carried out in the life of Matteo Ricci, a pioneer Italian Jesuit missionary who entered China in 1583 and established relations with the imperial court at Beijing, dying in China in 1610. What follows is taken from that talk.

When Ricci set off to convert the Son of Heaven to Christianity, Europe was in the throes of the Inquisition, reasserting Catholic values in the face of the success of the Protestant reformation. The young, tough, intellectual Jesuits of his order were vigorously involved both in internal church reform and in launching a "Christianizing empire" in the southern lands carved up by the Pope's division of the world between Portugal and Spain. The first prolonged contact that China had with the West was, therefore, an exchange between Catholics and Confucians.

The China that the Jesuits proposed to convert staggered European imagination. By far the largest country of its day, 16th century China had roughly the same geographic size as it has today, and a population of perhaps 110 million, compared to France's 7 or 8 million and Britain's 4 or 5. Two or three Chinese cities already had nearly one million in population, with a complexity of urban life that astonished visitors.

Europeans marveled at the Confucian examination system that provided the bureaucracy to hold this complexity and diversity together, and envied the cohesion and bond forged by the shared knowledge of a classical education 1,800 years old.

To this powerfully impressive, but also corrupt and decadent declining Ming dynasty China, Ricci and his fellow Jesuits brought elements of

Western culture--music, philosophy, geometry, and alchemy--hoping to pique Chinese interest and open the way for talking about Christianity.

Preparing to get maximum benefit from his cultural baggage, Ricci went to great lengths. At one point, he carried a harpsichord up and down the hills of China for 18 years, waiting for the opportune time to present it to the Emperor. In the meantime, he had an assistant train to perfection in two sonatinas in order to be prepared to give demonstrations and lessons.

In 1601, when the moment arrived for the presentation, the lessons given included some Chinese language imitations of Italian songs, to which Ricci had set Christian lyrics.

Ricci reached into the Confucian classics to create a basis for understanding his Christian message. Finding traces of monotheism in early Confucianism, he claimed to be calling for a return to a more pure form of Confucianism than the syncretic mixture of Confucian, Buddhist, and Taoist religions prevailing in his day.

Ricci, who learned to speak and write Chinese fluently, translated Euclid's geometry text and wrote five major books in Chinese on such topics as the training of memory and "stoicism in adversity." His goal was to convert the elite, and through the prestige of their conversions, move the masses to accept Christianity.

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Published by the Northwest Regional China Council, sponsored by the World Affairs Council of Oregon and The Asia Society China Council.

1912 S.W. Sixth, #252
Portland, Oregon 97201
(503) 229-3049

Editor: Jeffrey Barlow

Published quarterly.

Spence, born in England and trained in European history at Cambridge, went to Yale University in 1959 to follow his interest in the complexity of Chinese society and its comparison with Europe.

After earning his Ph.D. in Chinese history, he stayed on to teach at Yale. He is best known for bringing history to life through scrupulously accurate intimate portrayals of individual lives, in such books as Emperor of China, The Death of Woman Wang, and The Gate of Heavenly Peace. His book on Matteo Ricci and early Sino-Western contacts, The Memory Palace of Matteo Ricci, will be published in spring of 1984.

"It's wonderful to see this many people interested in the 16th century ," Spence greeted the 200 people who turned out for the talk, "very gratifying to those of us interested in rather arcane history."

Diane Fox

SPECIAL EVENTS

"CHINA FROM WITHIN": PHOTOGRAPHY EXHIBITION AND PUBLIC EVENTS

Exhibition: August 29--September 25

Portland State University, Smith Center, second floor, Littman Gallery

Open Monday through Thursday, noon to 4:00 PM; Sundays on September 11, 18, and 25, 2:00--5:00 PM

Sponsored by Portland State University and Northwest China Council; circulated by the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service (SITES)

No admission charge

The China From Within exhibition gives us China through the eyes of its own contemporary photographers. This show presents photographers improvising on the traditional themes found in traditional landscape painting--for centuries, one of China's highest art forms. The formulas that govern composition, space, and subject matter in Chinese landscape painting are clearly visible in the photographs. For example, about half of the images in the exhibition are taken from an elevated angle, providing a bird's-eye view and a sense of the total balance of forces in the landscape.

During the current period of reaction agains the Cultural Revolution in China, there has been a slight relaxation of the restrictions on photographic form and content. However, while Chinese photographers are showing growing interest in the work of Western photographers, the focus is on beautiful landscapes, technology and machinery, and portraits. Chinese photography does not seek to document Chinese culture and society; it is not an advocacy tool, but rather a restricted instrument used to emphasize unity, landscape, and a positive national image.

The Chinese government selected these photographs for an American tour to represent their country's view of itself. It is an insider's perspective, designed to transcend political differences and show a continuity of artistic tradition in China that pre-dated East-West relations. The photographers are all high level members of such Chinese organizations as Xinhua News Agency and the Chinese Photographers Association.

Reception and Lectures

Sunday, September 11, 18, and 25
2:00 PM (gallery open until 5:00 PM)

Portland State University, Smith Center, second floor

Sponsored by Northwest China Council

Asian Art Council members will greet the guests each Sunday

No admission charge

September 11, 2:00 PM--Reception

Wing Leong, who teaches Chinese painting and calligraphy at his Chinese Art Studio in Portland, will demonstrate brush painting. He is the author of several books that instruct the beginner in Chinese art. He was born in China and studied fine arts at the Chinese University of Hong Kong.

September 18, 2:00 PM--Slide Lecture

Donald Jenkins, director of the Portland Art Museum, will present "The Chinese Landscape in Scroll Paintings." Jenkins is an expert on Chinese and Japanese art and has an M.A. in Oriental Art from the University of Chicago. Jenkins is co-chair of the Northwest China Council.

September 25, 2:00 PM--Lecture and Poetry Reading

Kenneth Hanson,who has taught literature at Reed College since 1954, is also a translator of Chinese poetry and a poet in his own right. His talk is titled "Twin Figures: The Poem in the Chinese Landscape." Hanson has translated dozens of Chinese poets, including Tang poet Han Yu, in Growing Old Alive and Li Po Chin in The Distance Anywhere.

BOOKS IN THE NEWS

Son of the Revolution
Liang Heng and Judith Shapiro
Alfred A. Knopf, 1983

When reading Liang Heng and Judith

Shapiro's book, Son of the Revolution, one asks the question: how representative in China is the experience of Liang and his family? Certainly they were deeply affected by and involved in all of the major Chinese political movements of the recent past, beginning with the Hundred Flowers Movement in 1956-7; the subsequent movement to supress "Rightists" inside and outside the party in 1957-8; the economic collapse resulting from the Great Leap Forward's failures; and the so-called "reign of terror" by the Red Guards during the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution from 1966-9. Liang Heng, as the only son of intellectuals, whose mother was purged during the Anti-Rightist Campaign, whose father as a newspaper editor was attacked mercilessly during the Cultural Revolution, and who was himself personally involved in many of the anarchistic activities of this period, is hardly the typical Chinese "boy next door."

Furthermore, politics and the often elusive art of survival in a highly politicized situation appear to have compelled Liang Heng's father to divorce his wife because of the charges that she was a rightist. Few of Liang's peers came from a divorced family (most Chinese have never met a divorced person). Liang Heng's father also had a "past" in that he had at one time joined a youth group supporting Chiang Kai-shek. This resulted in severe questioning and then incarceration during the Cultural Revolution.

Liang Heng had developed strong family loyalty and ties during the breakdown of his family. He describes poignantly the trials suffered by him and his sisters with their efforts to see the divorced mother, who had been cast off from her family and children and their attempts to be "good" Chinese citizens and filial children to their beleaguered father. He tells of the trips and adventures of the Red Guards and the young people who emulated them. His ecstatic description of seeing Chairman Mao in Peking at the height of the Cultural Revolution conveys the emotion and devotion of the period. He not only took part in the wandering around the countryside, he also was on the fringe of the "bu hao" (bad) boys causing trouble and targeting victims among their own parents.

Liang Heng finally was drawn away from this life of near-crime by his family loyalty when at last his father was permitted home visits on a regular basis. This inspired Liang to continue serious study and behave in a manner which would bring his father and family approbation, not further criticism. However, the tribulations suffered by the Liang family were not over. At this time, intellectuals, both reformed ones and those who had escaped criticism, were encouraged to go to the countryside to assist the peasants. Liang's father was among the intellectuals sent down. The reader learns that the peasants were far from overjoyed to be host to useless intellectuals from the urban areas. They ate the food that was far from plentiful and, with these rations, led what seemed to the peasants privileged existences. Liang and his father had to work hard to win the begrudging respect of the peasants and suffered physically trying to adapt to the peasant life for which they were unsuited. Liang shows extreme admiration for the peasants and one must wonder if he would have, had he stayed at home in Changsha during this period.

From this experience, Liang returns to middle school. He and his father are pleased with his opportunity to resume study and Liang details the continuing gap between peasant students and those who come from an intellectual background. He shows sympathy for the peasant students in his class, but works to better his situation.

Opportunity strikes as he continues

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July 1, 1983

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. . . for responding so generously to our December 1982 newsletter contribution request. We raised more than half of the annual cost of the newsletter, which is $1,500. So, we must appeal to those of you whose name is not above--won't you make a contribution to the Northwest China Council? It will be tax-deductible.

If you give $25--$50, we will send you a copy of the China handbook published by the national China Council and written by Richard Bush and James Townsend. For a $50 donation or more, you will receive the newest China Briefing, published in 1983 by Westview Press and edited by Richard Bush, with very current articles on religion in China, China's military situation, energy outlook, international posture, and politics. Donors of $100 or more will receive a signed copy of The Gate of Heavenly Peace, Jonathan Spence's latest book, on the Chinese revolution.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Most Sincerely,

Jane Larson

Jane Leung Larson
Coordinator

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to grow surprisingly tall for a Southern Chinese, over six feet one inch in height. An enterprising factory eventually recruits him for their basketball team, through the "back door," an essential to moving up in the system in presentday China.

Liang's life continues to bring him extraodinary experiences, such as his brief affair with the daughter of a military commander, one of the new breed privileged to rise during the Cultural Revolution. Needless to say, the girl's parents deem him unsuitable because of his questionable background.

Testing in the revived examinations, Liang makes it into the university for further study. Here, he continues to live outside the mainstream of Chinese life. He studies, but feels unchallenged, he maintains, by the antiquated system of instruction. However, fate intervenes , and he meets a foreign expert who opens new vistas of study for him. He seeks out her instruction and also admits to a fascination with this Western, modern woman, so much freer and more open than the women with whom he studies. They develop a relationship which deepens into a conviction that against all odds they must attempt to marry. The honesty with which Liang describes his fascination with Shapiro and their secret meetings rescues this tale from being a mawkish, sentimental romance between two people separated by ideology and politics. In fact, from the outset, the reader can see that Liang is indeed unique and apart in his own society. He, of course, would be attracted to the different and unafraid of trying to break out of the confines of his country's mores. This is not to say that he shows disrespect for China or its politics, but just that, from beginning to end, through fate and experience, he has been outside the mainstream.

Son of Revolution can be seen as a new, revised tale of the family in China. Unlike the family ridden with intrigue, power struggles, and a stifling control of individuals in the classic Chinese novel, Dream of the Red Mansions, or, more recently, Ba Jin's stultifying, disintegrating Family, Liang Heng's family, though divorced and strewn about Hunan, remains strong and united in its ties.

Perhaps the most lasting impression of this book is the picture of a family's struggle for survival and, finally, its hopeful future in the merging of two cultures through Liang's marriage to the American teacher, Judy Shapiro. Their message is clear: the Cultural Revolution wreaked havoc and suffering upon scores of families, yet in the end perhaps the lesson was learned that, in the authors' words, "danger lies in blind obedience."

Christine Richardson-Barlow

CHINA DOCTOR OF JOHN DAY TO BE FILMED THIS SUMMER

"The Golden Flower" (Kam Wah Chung) is beginning to "bloom." The 28-minute, 16mm documentary film based on the book by Jeffrey Barlow and Christine Richardson, China Doctor of John Day, has taken two years to finance. Producer F. A. Hutchison announced that Citicorp (USA) Inc. (Seattle) has matched an Oregon Committee for the Humanities grant, and the project has been launched.

The film will be a juxtaposition--a contrast between the past and the present, the living and the dead. The seven Chinese professors from Guangxi province (currently studying at Lewis & Clark College) will tour the Kam Wah Chung Museum in John Day, where Ing "Doc" Hay and Lung On lived for fifty years; other museums in the area; and old

gold mining towns. Thus, the descendants meet up with their ancestors. The film will be the first about Chinese immigrants to the U.S. to be shown in the People's Republic of China.

After two hundred letters and follow-up calls and visits, Hutchison got a call last October from a Vice President of Citicorp who had been through John Day on vacation and had been told about the project when he visited the Kam Wah Chung Museum. The film will be produced this summer by Metamedia, through The Media Project, and will be directed by Hutchison.

SOUTH EUGENE HIGH WINS AWARD TO TEACH CHINESE

This fall, South Eugene High School will be the first Oregon high school to teach Chinese. Awarded $40,000 by the New Jersey-based Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation to initiate instruction in Chinese, South Eugene was one of 300 high schools in the country that the Foundation sought out to apply for funding in its "China Initiative" program. South Eugene was one of the sixteen funded programs.

Wayne Hill, Assistant Principal, was responsible for designing the grant-winning program, which starts in September with a beginning Chinese class, as well as a course in Chinese history and culture. It is hoped that ninth and tenth graders who would have the opportuntity to complete three or four years of language training will make up the bulk of the students.

The Chinese teacher (who will be hired this summer, after evaluation by Dodge Foundation Chinese language specialists) will eventually teach four years of the language, and a second teacher will be added in four or five years.

Given the University of Oregon's strong offerings in Chinese language, it will soon be possible for a Eugene university freshman with a high school background in Chinese to take full advantage of the university's intermediate and advanced courses in Chinese language and literature. Such students will also have had the advantage of first learning the language at an earlier age, facilitating the memorization of Chinese written characters and the acquisition of the spoken tones.

South Eugene High aims to become an international studies magnet school and will probably begin teaching Japanese in 1984.

Chinese Gourmet Dinner

Wen Chen, Northwest China Council board member who has taught Chinese cooking, language and calligraphy, is preparing a gourmet Chinese dinner on August 18 to benefit the China Council. The dinner will be given in Chen's home, which is graced with her brush paintings and calligraphy, and is in Vancouver, Washington,at 7:00 PM.

The dinner will include such dishes as Mu Shu pork, crispy fish roll, and butterfly shrimp. Since the dinner will be served in a private home, only 18 guests can be accommodated. The cost is $30 per person and is tax-deductible. Reservations are by check only (to "World Affairs Council for NWRCC"). A map and letter of confirmation of your reservation will be sent to you upon receipt of a check.

Wen Chen, born in Beijing and educated in Taiwan, came to the United States in 1964, where she has pursued a variety of careers, from textile designer, to, most recently, China liason manager for Nike, Inc. She is now an independent interpreter and consultant for China exchanges.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

July	7/1-7/30	"ONE SENSE OF BEAUTY": annual Asian American Art Exhibition, Wing Luke Museum, 414-8th St. S, Seattle, Tuesday--Friday, 11:00 AM to 4:30 PM, Saturday, noon to 4:00 PM. Donation asked.
	28	NORTHWEST CHINA COUNCIL BOARD MEETING: Board and associate members welcome; Peking Restaurant, 230 NW 4th; meeting, 6:00 PM; dinner, 7:15 PM ($8.00). Reservations: 229-3049.
August	5 - 6	"HISTORY AND CULTURE OF CHINA": Linfield College course, 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM. Information: 1-800-452-4176. Taught by Karen Gernant.
	8/5-9/24	EXHIBIT ON TIBET: Wing Luke Museum, 414-8th St. S, Seattle, Tuesday--Friday, 11:00 AM to 4:30 PM, Saturday, noon to 4:00 PM. Donation asked.
	18	* GOURMET CHINESE DINNER: Prepared by Wen Chen, at her home, as a benefit for the Northwest China Council. $30 per person; call 229-3049 for information.
	19 - 20	"INTRODUCTION TO BUDDHISM": Linfield College course, 9:00 AM to 5:00 Pm. Information: 1-800-452-4176.
	8/29-9/25	* "CHINA FROM WITHIN: CONTEMPORARY LANDSCAPES BY CHINESE PHOTOGRAPHERS": Exhibition from China at Portland State University, Smith Center, Littman Gallery. Open Monday--Thursday, noon to 4:00 PM; Sunday, September 11, 18 and 25, 2:00 to 5:00 PM. No admission charge. Information: 229-3020.
September	11	* "CHINA FROM WITHIN: RECEPTION AND CHINESE BRUSH PAINTING DEMONSTRATION": Portland State University, Smith Center, Littman Gallery; 2:00--5:00 PM; Wing Leong, Chinese Art Studio. No admission charge. Information: 229-3049.
	18	* "THE CHINESE LANDSCAPE IN SCROLL PAINTINGS: A SLIDE LECTURE BY DONALD JENKINS": Portland State University, Smith Center, Littman Gallery, 2:00 PM. Information: 229-3049.
	25	* "TWIN FIGURES: THE POEM IN THE CHINESE LANDSCAPE": Kenneth Hanson gives lecture and poetry reading, Portland State University, Smith Center, Littman Gallery, 2:00 PM. Information: 229-3049.

* Program sponsored by Northwest China Council

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This issue was prepared by Jeffrey Barlow, Diane Fox, Jane Larson, and Christine Richardson-Barlow.

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Please describe your special interest in China (trade, scholarly, lived in or traveled to China, Chinese descent, etc.). Let us know what programs we should organize for the future.

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The Northwest Regional China Council is formed to deepen public understanding of China's history, culture, and contemporary affairs (in the People's Republic, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and among Chinese-Americans). Our events are held all over Oregon and in Vancouver and Seattle, Washington and include exhibitions, lectures, conferences, teacher workshops, and business seminars. The Northwest China Council is a program of the World Affairs Council of Oregon and one of twelve regional China councils in the U.S. affiliated with The Asia Society.

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Most Sincerely,

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Jane Leung Larson
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