

Asian Studies in U. S.

By Charles C. Clayton

In an address on East-West relations several years ago, Mortimer Adler, director of the Institute for Philosophical Research in the United States borrowed a phrase from an Indian economist—"the yeast from the West". Now it is the "yeast" from the East which has germinated one of the significant new trends in higher education in the United States. It is only in the last five years that most American colleges and universities have become aware of the importance of Asia in the modern world. Now across the United States more and more institutions are establishing centers for Asian studies, and expanding their curricula to offer more courses in Asian history and culture.

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Among the trail blazers in this field were Columbia University in New York City, the University of Washington in Seattle, and the University of Chicago. At Columbia the program has been headed by Dr. Martin Wilbur, who is well known in Taiwan. He has spent several years in the Republic of China and speaks and reads Mandarin. Seminars and conferences at Columbia University and the University of Chicago have added to the literature concerning the Far East and have contributed to a better understanding of its problems by the American people.

While no accurate compilation has been made, there are at least several hundred American colleges and universities which have established Asian studies programs. More are being added every year. It is not improbable that in the years ahead this interest in Asian affairs may even be extended to American high schools. It would be a radical departure from the past. Even today the average American is graduated from high school without ever having a course in Asian history.

This is in startling contrast to even a quarter of a century ago. At Yale University, for example, at the time of Pearl Harbor there was only one two-hour course in Oriental history, and it was sparsely attended. The late Henry Luce, founder of *Time* and *Life* magazines, estimated that at the time of Pearl Harbor it would have been difficult to find even twenty Asian experts in the United States, and few of them were on college campuses. Today, according to Kenneth T. Young, Jr., former U.S. Ambassador to Thailand and head of the Asia Society, there are more than 2,000 Asian experts in the United States and he predicts the number will double in the next few years.

Today American universities are not only offering a much wider selection of Asian courses, but they are beginning to emphasize the study of the Chinese language. Southern Illinois University offers a major in the study of Mandarin, and in addition to its Asian studies has a Vietnam Center.

Even more significant is the fact that in the majority of American universities Asian centers are far more numerous than centers for the study of any other part of the world. In many schools, such as the University of Missouri, the only foreign center is the program for Asian studies. One result of this emphasis on Asia is that more American graduate students are coming to Asia and particularly to Taiwan, each year to research for their doctoral dissertations. These students look forward to teaching in American schools and recognize that a familiarity with Asia is a good talking point in obtaining teaching positions in the United States.

It is still literally true that the average American student's ideas about the Chinese people and their contributions to the world is a confused combination of fictional Chinese detectives, American movies and folklore handed down from their parents who thought of the Chinese people solely in terms of the American version of Chinese restaurants and laundries. It was this mishmash of misinformation which created the image of the Chinese as an inscrutable people who did everything backward.

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Fortunately, these myths are rapidly being dissipated. They began to disappear in World War II when thousands of American GIs fought the Japanese in the Pacific, and served in Burma and on mainland China. They returned home with a much more realistic concept of the Chinese people. Later other thousands served in the Korean War.

After World War II, there were two other developments which began to contribute to better understanding. One was the establishment of the Fulbright program, which made it possible to bring a number of teachers and scholars to Taiwan each year, as well as to send Chinese teachers and scholars to the United States. While the Fulbright program, under the direction of the United States Educational Foundation in China, is not as large as it was earlier, it still operates to bring students and teachers to Taiwan.

One important phase of the U.S. Educational Foundation in China program was to encourage individual contacts of the grantees with the Chinese people as well as to plan regular trips to points of interest in Taiwan. A number of the grantees were American graduate students whose research here provided material for doctoral dissertations on some phase of Chinese history or culture. There is no doubt that the interest thus engendered has had its influence in the establishment of Asian Studies programs in American universities.

It is true that American universities have been interested in China for at least fifty years. One of the first examples of cooperation with American universities was the establishment of the School of Journalism at Yenching University in Peiping by the late Walter Williams, then dean of the School of Journalism at the University of Missouri. There are many distinguished alumni of Yenching University now in Taiwan, including Mr. and Mrs. Y.P. Huang of the China

Post, Acting Foreign Minister James Shen, and James Wei, Director of the Government Information Office, who were students at Yenching University during the period, when some of the best known friends of China, including the late Vernon Nash and Maurice Votaw of the University of Missouri served on the faculty.

There were of course, other colleges and universities started on the mainland by Americans, but they were founded by missionaries and had little or no connection with American institutions of higher learning.

The first Christian college in China was founded by Calvin Mateer, a missionary, who came to China in the 1860s and located in Shantung Province. In 1904 a new campus was built on the inland plain and the name was changed to Shantung Christian University. The father of the late Mr. Luce, joined the faculty in 1900. Later Shantung University moved again, this time to the center of the province and boasted of a much larger campus. The name was changed to Chefoo University, and it became known for its medical school. By this time there were at least ten Christian universities on the mainland, but still no outstanding institution in Peiping, the cultural capital of the old China.

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Mr. Luce described the next step in an address he gave in Boston in 1941. He pointed out that the "greatest task of university building in China was the creation of Yenching University" in Peiping. He added:

“Shantung University, like most foreign building in China, whether commercial or missionary, had been built in American style, A plain, and to be sure, useful and economical American style, but esthetically empty. This bothered my father, and one of his most cherished dreams came true when the architect, Henry Killam Murphy, worked out for Yenching a magnificent blending of American functionalism and gay, brilliant Chinese beauty. This merging of the American into the Chinese was simply the outward and visible symbol of an inward and spiritual grace which all the American leaders of education in China have cultivated for years and years—namely, the desire that in the management of their institutions, Americans should become less and less and Chinese more and more. Today most of the colleges are run mostly by Chinese. If this be imperialism, make the most of it—and if this is imperialism, the Chinese would say: give us more.”

The second development since World War II has been the great increase in the numbers of Chinese students, largely from Taiwan, who have gone to American colleges and universities for graduate study. While it was true that some went from the mainland before the Japanese invasion, it was but a trickle to the numbers that enrolled in American institutions, largely since 1958. In that year there were probably no more than a few hundred studying in America. Today the total has grown to more than 5,000 annually. Southern Illinois University is typical. Of the approximately 800 overseas students on the SIU campus at Carbondale,

Ill., more than 200 are Chinese students and they make up the largest group of foreign students at the university.

These students have helped create an awareness of Asian culture and undoubtedly have been one of the important influences in the trend toward establishing Asian study centers. More important, many of them have joined the faculties of American colleges and universities after receiving their advanced degrees, and they too have added to the interest in Asian studies. It is significant that one of the reasons many of them have been asked to join the faculties of American universities is the knowledge of Asian culture and affairs.

A few examples illustrates this point. Dr. David Chang, who is a visiting professor this year at National Chengchi University, is a member of the political science faculty at the University of Wisconsin at Oshkosh, Wis., and is active in Asian studies there. Dr. Joseph Huang, is chairman of the Political Science Department at Tougaloo College in Jackson, Miss. Dr. Chu Chi-ying, who received his doctorate from Southern Illinois University in August, is teaching international journalism at Chico State University in California. The factor which led to his selection over other candidates was his knowledge of Asian affairs.

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At Southern Illinois University which has set up an Asian studies program, there are a number of faculty members from Taiwan. The history department at SIU is headed

by a Chinese. Many others, some of them outstanding in their fields, are teaching at other univ. As the trend toward emphasis on Asian studies continues, the opportunities for Chinese in American institutions will increase. This growing interest in Asia and the preferment of Chinese teachers from Taiwan is a definite plus for the Republic of China. It is important that the story of the progress made in Taiwan in the last two decades, as well as the contrast with the turmoil and the disasters on the mainland, be told to the American people. In this sense, both the students and those who remain to teach in American schools are excellent ambassadors of goodwill for the Republic of China. Truth is always the most effective salesman.

There is another reason for the growing interest in Asian studies in the United States. It is only in this generation that people everywhere have come to realize that the world has shrunk in time and space in our jet age. Today, when no place on the globe is more than 24 hours distant from any other place, distance now is measured in air speed and not in miles. Today people everywhere have come to learn that all news is local and main street never ends. What happens in Taipei, or in Singapore, or in the Argentine affects prices in the United States and has a direct bearing on world peace and national security.

Moreover, news today is not as easy to understand. There is need for explanation and interpretation. Particularly is this need important in the United States and more

specifically, America now recognizes the urgency of understanding Asia better. It is America's awareness of this need which has helped accelerate the establishment of Asian study centers in American colleges and universities.

There is need on both sides of the Pacific for a new Transpacific Dialogue. Rudyard Kipling may have been right in his time when he suggested that "East is East and West is West, and never the twain shall meet". Even allowing for poetic license, he probably was wrong in the Nineteenth Century. He certainly was wrong for the Twentieth Century. As Mr. Luce pointed out in an address to the Commonwealth Club in San Francisco in 1965, mankind is still divided into two worlds—the Orient and the Occident. Mankind is still divided by thousands of years of separate history, with in his words, "profoundly different intellectual, ethical and political patterns of thought and feeling".

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Certainly mankind has not yet achieved the "One World" concept espoused by the late Wendell Wilkie in the 1940s. East and West are much closer in terms of physical contact and in the areas of science and technology. But as Mr. Luce emphasized, the Orient and the Occident are still worlds apart in their intellectual, ethical and political patterns. Acceptance of this fact underscores the significance of the trend toward Asian studies in American universities.

While the average American is not yet willing to accept the idea, the United States is today the leader of the Oc-

cident, with all the problems and responsibilities inherent in that position of leadership. In the first half of the Twentieth Century, the United States came to the rescue of Europe, and settled its recurring civil wars. In the second half of this century, the great task confronting the United States as a leader of the Free World is to bring East and West closer together. Many historians have suggested that the Twenty-first Century will belong to the Orient. Professor F.S.C. Northrop of Yale University pointed out twenty years ago in his book, "The Meeting of East and West", the significance of this prospect. He wrote:

"The most important ideological conflict confronting our world is the one rendered inescapable by the major event of our time—the meeting of East and West. Within the all-embracing and deep-going issues raised by this momentous occurrence the other ideological conflicts of our world are partial components."

Mr. Luce agreed that the East-West confrontation is even more important for the future than the struggle against Communism. "Communism", he said, "becomes every day more irrelevant to the future of the world, both because of its economic incompetence and its absurd philosophy. Ideologically, the East-West problem remains the top priority and it is within the East-West conflict that Communism remains a danger. Communism is still a danger in the Orient because of the intellectual and moral confusion caused by the breakdown of Asia's traditional thought patterns

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under the impact of the West. The West had a shattering effect on the Orient, but was unable to be constructive, partly because the West itself was going through a period of revolutionary change and intellectual confusion, and also because of the West's indifference to and ignorance of the mind and soul of Asia."

While the West has been indifferent to what can be learned from the East, the opposite is true in the Orient, and nowhere is it more evident than in Taiwan. The friendship between the United States and the Republic of China has assisted Taiwan to acquire the technology of the West. It is a source of satisfaction to both countries that Taiwan is the first to be able to stand on its own economic feet and to make possible the phasing out of American economic aid. More important for the future, the result is that Taiwan has become the showcase of Democracy in Asia, a fact as disturbing to Communist China as is West Berlin to Communism in Europe.

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Taiwan's achievement is recognized in the United States. Unfortunately, the average American understands it only in terms of business statistics and industrial indices. What is not generally understood in America is that the real revolution in China—the revolution begun by Dr. Sun Yat-sen in 1911—continues in Taiwan, and not on the Chinese mainland. The real revolution in Asia is not merely a clash of ideologies. It is the revolution to bring the Orient into the Twentieth Century, or in other words to mold the East into something

radically different from what it has been No.where is it better exemplified than in the Republic of China.

The ancient Greeks gave the world the concept of the polis—the city—state, from which is derived the English word politics Under this concept there were two main points: the invention of a constitution and constitutional government; and the invention of the citizen as an official of the state. Ancient Rome gave the world the concept of law and order. The philosopher Will Durant, has pointed out that “Rome has left us its laws and its tradition of administration as the bases of social order.” what the modern west contributes is the American concept of liberty under the law. Dr. Sun Yat-sen was well aware of these Western concepts when he drafted the constitution of the Republic of China.

The other side of the coin is what the west, and specifically what the United States can learn from the East. The fact is that there is much the west can learn from Asia. The Chinese tradition of the family, the teachings of China’s great philosophers, Chinese art and culture are only a few of the lessons the West can acquire with profit.

Perhaps most important of all, as Mr. Luce pointed out, the West through a better understanding of Asia “can rediscover, even recreate, a knowledge of itself. In trying to explain itself to the East, the men of the West will not only rediscover the meaning of the West; they will also discover with more precision what is lacking in the West. Thus they will end up learning from the East.”

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Mr. Luce added this significant comment:

"The future of mankind depends on the response of the East to the West, and that depends on whether the West knows what the East has to say."

The expanding program of Asian study centers in the United States is probably the best assurance of the hope that the West will be able to comprehend what the East has to say. It well may be that in the years ahead this program will prove to be the most significant single factor in bringing the East and West together and demonstrating for all time the fallacy in Kipling's Nineteenth Century prediction.