

Obituaries

WING-TSIT CHAN

(1901–1994)

Wing-tsit Chan, the eminent authority on Chinese philosophy and religion, died peacefully of natural causes on August 12, 1994, at the age of 92, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, after a long life of dedicated service to scholarship and teaching. An early leader in the development of Asian studies in America, Professor Chan was honored by the Association for Asian Studies toward the end of his career when he received the Association's Distinguished Service Award, with a citation that spoke of him as "More than anyone else in the world, the mediator of the Chinese scholarly tradition to the West."

Born into a peasant family in a village near Canton (Guangzhou), Wing-tsit Chan's intelligence and promise, quickly recognized, earned him his family's support for further education at a Western-style college. After completing his undergraduate degree at Lingnan University, the new Christian college near Canton, he spent a year in travel abroad and then entered Harvard University to study philosophy under W. E. Hocking and A. N. Whitehead, among other teachers there. He received his Ph.D. in 1929. Like other highly gifted young Chinese scholars of his generation, including Hu Shih and Fung Yu-lan, Chan wished to apply his learning and energies to the betterment of his country, and so returned to teach at Lingnan, where, as was quite natural in those days for a new Ph.D. graduate from America—the modern equivalent of a *chin-shih* degree holder—he soon found himself in a position of considerable authority and responsibility as academic dean in the early 1930s.

Unsettled political and military conditions, however, and the proximate threat of Japanese invasion, led Professor Chan to accept a position at the University of Hawaii in 1936. Although he moved from there to Dartmouth College in 1942, Chan retained lifelong personal and academic associations with Hawaii, and frequently returned there for conferences and to assist in the projects of his friend, Charles Moore, especially in the series of East-West Philosopher's Conferences.

At Dartmouth, Professor Chan became known as a lively presence on campus, a stimulating lecturer, and an energetic promoter of Asian studies. Many Dartmouth alumni remember him as an inspiring teacher and Dartmouth colleagues recall him as a warm and generous friend. His close association with Dartmouth continued through two sons and a grandson, at whose graduation the proud grandfather received an honorary degree from Dartmouth.

Professor Chan's special interest in the study of Chinese philosophy and religion manifested itself in the production of numerous articles, teaching aids, and bibliographical guides. In 1948–49, commissioned to make a study of contemporary Chinese religion, he returned to China and traveled extensively in pursuit of his research, but, forced back to Canton and Lingnan by advancing Communist armies, he returned to the United States and Dartmouth to complete his *Religious Trends in Modern China* (Columbia University Press, 1953), which remains an invaluable record of the state of religion in the pre-Communist era.

While still at Dartmouth, Professor Chan began what was to become a series of major translation projects, first collaborating with W. T. de Bary in the production of *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, a widely used textbook for general education published by Columbia University Press in 1960. Next came his translation of the *Platform Scripture* of the Sixth Ch'an Buddhist Patriarch (St. John's University Press, 1963), and then his monumental *Source Book in Chinese Philosophy* (Princeton University Press, 1963), a standard work still not superseded in this field.

The wide range of Chan's interests in Chinese philosophy and religion was further shown by his translation of the *Tao-te ching* as *The Way of Lao Tzu*, published by Bobbs-Merrill in 1963, with a scholarly introduction surveying much of the earlier studies of this classic text. Perhaps the culmination of his work of translation from the Chinese, raised by him to a new level of scholarly art, came with his translations of Wang Yang-ming's *Instructions for Practical Living* (*Ch'uan-hsi lu*) (1963), Chu Hsi's *Reflections on Things at Hand* (*Chin-ssu lu*) (1967) and Ch'en Ch'un's *Neo-Confucian Terms Explained* (*Pei-hsi tzu-i*) (1986), all published by Columbia University Press in its Neo-Confucian Studies series. The extensive research and consistent methodology embodied in these translations not only set a high standard of precise and thoroughgoing translation but also established translation itself as a major form of original scholarly research in Chinese intellectual history, opening up the field of Neo-Confucian studies for many younger scholars.

In 1964, while continuing at Dartmouth, Chan began what proved to be a thirty-four-year association with Columbia University, first as a visiting professor, then as a regular participant in the graduate Neo-Confucian seminar, and eventually as co-founder with W. T. de Bary of two University (i.e., post-doctoral) Seminars, the University Seminar in Oriental Thought and Religion, and the Regional Seminar in Neo-Confucianism. These associations continued after Chan's retirement from Dartmouth, and throughout his subsequent service as Anna R. D. Gillespie Professor at Chatham College.

Through these activities over almost thirty years, Professor Chan extended his accessibility to a wide range of graduate students and scholarly colleagues who came from the New York area and East Coast universities to benefit from his broad and humane scholarship. He was most generous with his time in sharing his great learning, especially in helping younger scholars in these seminars, many of whom, now established in positions at other universities, have vivid recollections of his personal guidance and instruction.

Closely associated with these seminars were numerous scholarly conferences. In addition to the earlier East-West Philosopher's meetings, Chan was particularly identified with a series of meetings on diverse aspects of Neo-Confucianism, beginning with the Conference on Ming Studies held at the University of Illinois in 1966. The conference proceedings, like those of other conferences later, were dedicated to him in tribute to the mature and generous scholarship he brought to the development of studies in Chinese thought and philosophy. The culmination of this process was a major conference on Chu Hsi studies at the University of Hawaii and the East-West Center in the summer of 1982, organized and led by Professor Chan himself. This conference also signaled the increasing focus of Professor Chan's own studies on Chu Hsi, the leading Neo-Confucian scholar and thinker, of whom Professor Chan made himself a leading and, after the death of Ch'ien Mu in 1990, the pre-eminent scholarly authority—a stature confirmed by such publications as *Chu Hsi and Neo-Confucianism* (University of Hawaii Press, 1986) and *Chu Hsi, New Studies* (Hawaii, 1989).

Professor Chan was a man of lasting loyalties—diverse, but complementary, not competing. He retained a strong affection for colleagues with whom he was associated and for those institutions that had supported his education and scholarly work over the years. This was no less true of his devotion to his homeland. A longstanding and active member of the Academia Sinica in Taiwan, he also contributed generously to his family and hometown in Kuangtung, and was pleased to assist during his last years in the translation of his major works into Chinese.

WM. THEODORE DE BARY
Columbia University

HERRLEE GLESSNER CREEL

(1905–1994)

Herrlee Glessner Creel, the Martin A. Ryerson Emeritus Distinguished Service Professor of Chinese History at the University of Chicago, died at his home in Palos Park, Illinois, after a long illness, on June 1, 1994. He was 89. His passing marks the end of an era. He was a giant among specialists on early Chinese civilization, and has been described as the doyen of American sinologists. He established the University of Chicago as a leading center of East Asian Studies. It is not given to many men in any generation to have the impact on a significant area of scholarship that Herrlee Creel has had on our understanding of early Chinese civilization.

From the appearance of his first book in 1929 until the time of his death, Professor Creel was in the forefront of sinological scholarship. Some indication of the lasting value of his work may be seen in the fact that, although he published in this field for half a century, most of his major books remain in print. This is due not only to the quality of his scholarship but also, in no small part, to his prose style, which consistently exemplified standards of cogency, lucidity, and grace rarely found in academic writing. In his ability to explore the frontiers of knowledge, no matter how esoteric or complex the subject matter, and report his findings with a degree of clarity and elegance that made them readily accessible, not only to specialists but to the interested layman, he set standards to which most of us can only aspire. Although he described himself as a specialist on early Chinese history, the history of Chinese philosophy, and the history of Chinese governmental institutions, his range was much broader, and included contributions to archaeology and anthropology; epigraphy, philology, and linguistics; intellectual, cultural, economic, and institutional history; and philosophy, art, and literature.

Herrlee Creel was born in Chicago on January 19, 1905. He was educated at the University of Chicago: Ph.B., 1926; A.M., 1927; Ph.D., 1929 (in Chinese Philosophy). After teaching as an assistant professor of psychology at Lombard College in 1929–30, he received fellowships from the American Council of Learned Societies (1930–33), the Harvard-Yenching Institute (1931–35), and the Rockefeller Foundation (1936, 1945–46). In 1936 he accepted a position at the University of Chicago, where he was Instructor in Chinese History and Language (1936–37), Assistant