

Editor's Note

After more than a year in preparation, the first edition of *Journal of Chinese Humanities* has finally arrived.

Our intention behind creating this new journal is to allow the entire academic world to better understand and observe China, to allow all scholars to follow the academic trends happening within China, to provide scholars with a way to stay abreast of the current thought and research coming out of China. If we are successful in providing such service to the reader, we have become what we sought out to be: an intellectual bridge between China and her outside observers, in other words, a bridge between those who study China and the China that they study.

It is important to understand China. China is not only ascending to the world stage, but also solidifying her central position on that stage. And as has been the case every time a new power emerges, the world order changes with it. There is no reason to believe that China's ascension will be any different.

China has had an increasing presence and influence on world affairs over the last few decades, but this has not changed the fact that, in the eyes of too many, China and all that her long culture entails remain a mystery. It is ironic that a nation so large can remain behind a cloud mystery for so long, yet China never ceases to confound and astound the outside world in what it has achieved and how it has endured. The continued development that so many experts claim to be impossible has proven to be a reality. China's unique path—political, economic, social—continues to defy Western theories that use their own cultural histories to predict how, when, and why China will meet its next crisis. All this demonstrates to us that there is still so much to China that needs to be explained and clarified to the Western world.

Paramount among what needs to be shown to the Western world are the intellectual trends taking place right now inside China. For much of the history between the East and West, there has been a disparity of mutual understanding. That is to say, China's knowledge of the West has far exceeded the West's knowledge of China. And if we take this one step further, we can attribute this lack of understanding to insufficient channels for understanding. In the face of China's recent and undeniable influence on world affairs, the need for channels of understanding is greater than ever. The creation of *Journal of Chinese Humanities* is our attempt to provide such a needed channel.

With this in mind, the uniqueness of this *Journal of Chinese Humanities* lies in the fact that the majority of research articles and book reviews that we introduce to Western sinologists are from Chinese scholars working in China. Instead of focusing on what Westerners have to say about China, we show the English-speaking world what China says about China. In the face of so much (Western-language) literature available to us about this complex country, research coming out of China itself seems conspicuously underrepresented. This problem needs to be remedied if the East and West are to have a proper dialogue in the hope of real mutual understanding.

But our *Journal of Chinese Humanities* was not born simply from good intentions. Behind its inception is the long-standing Chinese-language humanities journal *Wen Shi Zhe* (文史哲) published at Shandong University, also known by its English name, *Journal of Literature, History and Philosophy*. *Wen Shi Zhe* has been one of the pillars of academic discussion in China since its first issue in 1951. Its broad range of humanities topics and dedication to creative research value have kept it at the vanguard of intellectual trends for more than half a century. Drawing upon the resources and high standards of *Wen Shi Zhe*, Shandong University has decided to carry forward this tradition to the outside world, and has thus created an English-language journal on Chinese humanities.

In this effort to make China's voice heard in international dialogues, we select and translate for the Western reader articles from top Chinese scholars in their fields. Each issue has a specific theme pertaining to literature, history, or philosophy, and the majority of articles concentrate on topics related to this theme. Each issue will also include a limited number of contributions from Western authors, in order to ensure multiple view points and inspiring dialogues.

The theme for this inaugural issue is "Forms and Formation of Chinese Society." This has been an important topic of philosophical and historical debate in China for the last one hundred years, as it has much to say not just about our past but also our future. The articles in this first issue focus primarily on the formation of ancient Chinese society and its evolution over the two thousand year span between the Qin and Qing Dynasties. With articles such as "The Society of Patriarchal Clan System," "The Era of Prefectures and Counties," "The Northern and Southern Dynasties and the Course of History since Middle Antiquity," and "New Thoughts on the Social Forms in Ancient China," these Chinese authors attempt to find theoretical frameworks that can accurately explain China's unique course of history. This issue also includes

articles that study the more recent history of Chinese society, how it changes, and how these changes are perceived and manifested. “From *kang* to *kongtiao*: China’s Twentieth Century Cooling” and “The Refracted Moment: Photographing Chinese History in the Making” both attempt to capture the nature of Chinese society’s recent changes from a very particular vantage point.

We hope that our readers will enjoy *Journal of Chinese Humanities*, whether the reader is a professional sinologist or simply an interested China observer. Despite having set lofty goals for ourselves and this journal, it is our humble hope that Western readers will be able to benefit from the academic literature offered here, and in turn contribute to this journal and contribute to the important ongoing discussion between the East and West.

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