

A Chinese-Origin Scholar of China in the United States

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Coming to North America (first for one year in Canada and then the United States) from Hong Kong at the age of 13, after a mostly Chinese education, I was somewhat handicapped in English compared to the best of my American fellow students. At the same time, in graduate school in Chinese studies, when compared with the best of the fellow Chinese students coming mostly from Taiwan for graduate study after college, I was also somewhat handicapped in the level of my Chinese. However, in terms of combined abilities in English and Chinese, I was actually advantaged, in comparison with both the American students and the Chinese graduates from Taiwan or Hong Kong universities.

Looking back today at my decision to go into Chinese history as a profession in the United States, I can see that, in addition to strong emotional and intellectual interests in China, I was also drawn by the fact that, despite my slightly handicapped abilities in English when compared to the best American students, and slightly handicapped abilities in Chinese when compared to the best Chinese students from Taiwan, my combined abilities in the two languages actually gave me an advantage in the field of Chinese studies in the U.S.

That factor had not been a deliberate calculation on my part in choosing to do graduate studies on China. Instead, my decision to pursue an academic career in Chinese studies in the U.S. had been driven by a deep-seated interest in China, both emotional and intellectual. But my combined Chinese and English language abilities were certainly a major reason for how well I could do in graduate school and in the profession of China studies in the U.S. when compared to others. My native-born background in Chinese was of course an advantage over typical American students pursuing Chinese studies on the graduate level, as was my native or very nearly native facility in English when compared to Chinese students from Taiwan or Hong Kong studying in the U.S. to become China specialists in the U.S.

Deeper than linguistic facility, perhaps, was my emotional and intellectual engagement with China, especially in its modern period -- when it came to be faced with the challenges and encroachments cum invasion from the West, and invasion and occupation by Japan, ending finally with the rise of the People's Republic of China. While the U.S. has been my adoptive country, China has always been and remains for me my motherland. Those combined sentiments form a rather different emotional makeup from that of the simply U.S.-born Americans who are China scholars, and also from the China- or Taiwan-born China scholars working in the U.S.

As a U.S.-based scholar of China, I had significant advantages over Americans who did not have similar Chinese language roots, as well as over Chinese scholars from Taiwan or Hong Kong who did not have comparably native English-language abilities. Those factors and considerations were of course never completely explicit in my choice and decision to pursue Chinese studies in the U.S. as a profession, but they certainly gave me advantages over the American students who had to take up Chinese from scratch as a foreign language, as well as over Chinese students from Taiwan or Hong Kong who had to develop their English as a foreign language to study and teach in the U.S.

Once embarked on a career as a professional China scholar in the United States, I ended up writing, in the end, more in Chinese (15 books) than in English (6 books)—see bibliography below—in large measure because I turned to writing mainly in Chinese once I retired from university teaching in the U.S. This aspect might be somewhat surprising and unusual, in part because relatively few scholars have continued to write and publish actively after retirement, and perhaps still fewer have turned to writing in Chinese rather than English after a 38-year career teaching and writing in English at an American university (University of California, Los Angeles, [UCLA]).

My scholarly career, then, has been somewhat unusual, or even surprising. Though teaching and living mainly in the United States throughout my life, the majority of

my published books to date are in Chinese rather than English. That, perhaps, is rather unexpected given the fact that I have lived almost entirely in the United States since coming from Hong Kong at the age of 13. Looking back today at the age of 86, I can see that my persistence in writing and publishing long after retirement is also somewhat unusual, perhaps the more so because my writings have been mainly in Chinese rather than English.

Why? Perhaps even I cannot fully explain it myself, other than to point to a deep-seated emotional and intellectual concern with China and the Chinese people.

Though a China scholar in the U.S. for life by profession, it seems that my heart has perhaps always been very much with Chinese readers, more than English-language readers.

Now at the age of 86, I can see that I really do not fit too well with the typical image of an “American China scholar,” if only because I seem more concerned in the end with Chinese readers than with American readers. Yet it would also make no sense to speak of myself as simply a Chinese scholar of China, since I have worked my entire life in the U.S. and not China. The basic reality is that I have been a scholar of China in the United States all of my life, but with my heart more in China and with Chinese readers.

To that extent, the term “American China scholar” does not quite capture what my life has been about. Of course, neither does the term “Chinese scholar of China.” I certainly have lived and worked my entire life in the U.S. and not in China, and cannot be categorized with Chinese scholars living and working all their lives in China, who are far more closely and completely identified with the People’s Republic of China than I.

To convey the fact that I have long lived and worked in the U.S., perhaps the term “Chinese-origin scholar of China in the United States” would be the most accurate designation, not simply “American China scholar” or “Chinese scholar of China.” My lifelong identification with China has been mainly cultural and historical, more than political. In preference to “American China scholar” or “Chinese scholar of China,” I think the term “Chinese-origin scholar of China in the United States” might be the most accurate and appropriate.

Appendix: My 15 monographs in English and Chinese, all written by me except for the Chinese translation of the first book, as noted below.

Liang Ch'i-ch'ao and Modern Chinese Liberalism, Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1972. 中文版《梁启超与中国的自由主义》，王圣译，西北大学出版社，2023 年版。

The Peasant Economy and Social Change in North China. Stanford, CA: Stanford Univ. Press, 1985. (Based mainly on Mantetsu surveys of the 1930s and local gazetteers. **Awarded the Fairbank Prize of the American Historical**

Association.) 中文版《华北的小农经济与社会变迁》中华书局 1986 年版，2000 年、2004 年再版，法律出版社 2014 年版。

The Peasant Family and Rural Development in the Yangzi Delta, 1350-1988. Stanford, CA: Stanford Univ. Press, 1990. (Based on Mantetsu surveys of the 1930s, local gazetteers and agricultural treatises, and my own ethnographic research. **Awarded the Levenson Prize of the Association for Asian Studies.**) 中文版《长江三角洲的小农经济与乡村发展》中华书局 1992 年版，2000 年、2006 年再版，法律出版社 2014 年版。

Civil Justice in China: Representation and Practice in the Qing. Stanford, CA: Stanford Univ. Press, 1996. (Based mainly on 628 Qing period cases from Baxian, Baodi, and Danshui-Xinzhu counties. Supplemented by magistrate handbooks and the Mantetsu ethnographic studies). 中文版《清代的法律、社会与文化：民法的表达与实践》上海书店出版社 2003 年版，2007 年再版。法律出版社 2014 年增订版。

Code, Custom, and Legal Practice in China: The Qing and the Republic Compared. Stanford, CA: Stanford Univ. Press, 2001. (Based on 875 Qing and Republican cases from four counties, supplemented by detailed ethnographic information on village-level disputes in the period.) 中文版《法典、习俗与司法实践：清代与民国的比较》上海书店出版社 2003 年版，2007 年再版。法律出版社 2014 年增订版。

Chinese Civil Justice, Past and Present. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2010. 中文版《过去和现在：中国民事法律实践的探索》法律出版社 2009 年版，2014 年增订版。广西师范大学出版社 2024 年最新版。

China's Hidden Agricultural Revolution. 《中国的隐性农业革命》，法律出版社，2010 年版。In Chinese only.

Beyond the Left and the Right: The History of Practice and China's Rural Development. 《超越左右：实践历史与中国农村的发展》。广西师范大学出版社 2024 年版。[原题《超越左右：从实践历史出发探寻中国农村发展的出路》，法律出版社 2014 年版]。In Chinese only.

Practice and Theory: The History and Present of Chinese Society, Economy, and Law. 《实践与理论：中国社会、经济与法律的历史与现实研究》法律出版社 2015 年版。广西师范大学出版社 2024 年最新版《实践与理论：中国社会经济史与法律史研究》。In Chinese only.

China's New Justice System: Practice and Theory 《中国的新型正义体系：实践与理论》，广西师范大学出版社 2020 年版。In Chinese only.

China's New Informal Economy: Practice and Theory. 《中国的新型非正规经济：实践与理论》，广西师范大学出版社 2020 年版。In Chinese only.

Experience and Theory: A History of Practice Study of Chinese Society, Economy, and Law. 《经验与理论：中国社会、经济与法律的实践历史研究》，中国人民大学出版社 2008 年版。广西师范大学出版社 2024 年最新版。In Chinese only.

Practice and Theory: A Study of the History and Present of Chinese Society, Economy, and Law. 《实践与理论：中国社会、经济与法律的历史与现实研究》，法律出版社 2015 年版。广西师范大学出版社 2024 年最新版。In Chinese only.

The Dualistic Unity of State and Society: A Retrospective and Prospective View of Chinese History 《国家与社会的二元合一：中国历史回顾与前瞻》，广西师范大学出版社 2022 年版。In Chinese only.

The Social Science of Practice: Method, Theory, and Prospective Vision 《实践社会科学的方法、理论与前瞻》，广西师范大学出版社 2023 年版。In Chinese only.
