

Conferment of the Degree of Doctor of Literature, *honoris causa* A Citation

Professor Hsu Cho-yun, DHum (Hon), BA, MA, PhD

There is a remarkable difference between the famous historian Professor Hsu Cho-yun and other historians in the way they came to take up history as their area of research: in 1949 Professor Hsu applied to Taiwan University for admission to the Foreign Languages Department and was matriculated with distinguished examination results. In Mathematics he scored 100% and would therefore be fully qualified for either a literary or a mathematical career. However, Professor Hsu, having come from a background of fine family tutelage, had already developed an intense love for the *Shiji* and for the study of history, and it was apparent that he was cut out for a significant role in the discipline, after the manner that Sima Qian earlier defined as "to study the ways of the Heaven and the Earth, to understand the changes ancient and modern, and to develop a school of one's own" in his *A Letter in Reply to Ren An*. As a result he spent a year in the Foreign Languages Department and, with excellent academic grades and at the recommendation of his teachers, changed his major subject to History, from which point an illustrious academic career would begin.

Professor Hsu graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in History from Taiwan University in 1953, and a master's degree in the Humanities in 1956, and he obtained his PhD from the University of Chicago in 1962. In 1962 to 1970 he was the Chairman of the History Department of Taiwan University and the Director of its Institute of History, and was elevated to a Professorship which he occupied from 1965 to 1970. In 1970 he moved to the University of Pittsburgh as Professor of History and Sociology, and from 1982 to 1998 he was University Professor at Pittsburgh. His distinguished service at Pittsburgh for over three decades was crowned with an Emeritus University Professorship in History and Sociology which was bestowed on him upon retirement in 1998, and which he is currently holding. In addition, Professor Hsu was the John A Burns Chair Professor at the University of Hawaii at Manoa when he was visiting there in 1996, and the Seamans Distinguished Professor at Duke University in 1999. In 2000, he was the Y K Pao Visiting Chair in Cultural Studies at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, and at present he is a part-time Research Fellow in the Institute of History and Philology at the Academia Sinica in Taiwan.

Professor Hsu Cho-yun is a scholar much admired for the range and profundity of his learning, which embraces five thousand years of written records of Chinese culture and carries a special emphasis on the history of the Zhou, Qin and Han Dynasties. He is an expert in applying the social sciences to historical research, and apt to probe not

only the interaction among regional cultures, but, more importantly, the communication among culture circles on the global plane. Professor Hsu's achievements may be borne out by his prolific output of academic publications: in terms of published works in Chinese he has written 34 books and another 21 in joint authorship, and edited (some jointly with other editors) a further ten volumes. He also has 162 academic articles to his credit. With regard to publications in foreign languages, Professor Hsu has written three books and another two in joint authorship, and 56 academic articles. This illustrious corpus of learned publications pertains to historiography, literature, philosophy, archaeology, sociology, political science, ethics, management, science and technology, and Chinese and foreign civilizations. At the age of sixty Professor Hsu decided to devote his energy to the narrowing of the gap between academic learning and daily life, and the popularizations of research results as a contribution to society. Over the intervening years Professor Hsu has made fruitful use of his gift of presenting lofty academic subjects through approachable, convincing writing, with remarkable results that are known to all.

In recent years, Professor Hsu has studied the corporate governance of modern enterprises from the vantage point of Chinese historical research, and put the emphasis on the mode of leadership and management, social structure, and political systems. Taking the "Ancient of Days Among Rivers" Changjiang, as example, he seeks to narrate the growth of Chinese culture, and points out that the cultural systems currently possessed by the respective nations will, in due course, merge, integrate and come into common possession by all who inhabit the earth, and be further explored by the global community. In 1980 Professor Hsu was elected as an Academician of the Academia Sinica in Taiwan, in 1986 he became a Member of the Phi Beta Kappa Society, in 2000 he was presented with the Doctor of Humanities, *honoris causa*, by the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, and in 2004 he received the Award for Distinguished Contributions to Asian Studies of the Association for Asian Studies in the United States.

Liu Zhiji, the renowned historiographer of the Tang Dynasty, opined that the historian should be in possession of three most important attributes, namely, ability in history, knowledge in history, and understanding of history. Professor Hsu's career in history research is likened to one steering the vessel of historiography on the long river of history and, through the course of several decades, the navigator has built up a profound knowledge of water movements, be it gentle waves, minor ripples, or soaring tides and overwhelming tsunamis, all of which he has mastered with consummate skills, and the hallmarks of the great historian, the ability, the knowledge and the understanding, are evident wherever he goes. Professor Hsu himself suggests that, as mankind has now entered the age of globalization, its situation is like standing at the point where the Changjiang converges with the ocean, "where ancient and majestic

waters continue their flow from behind, thundering down their course with thousands of years of accumulated cultural energy," all ready to witness the assimilation of disparate cultures of the world into one unique entity. Such a prophetic view is only possible from a scholar of the most perceptive understanding of the ancients and the soundest foresight for the world to come, and at the same time the fullest manifestation of the historian's ability, knowledge and understanding as advocated by Liu Zhiji. The Qing Dynasty historiographer Zhang Xuecheng has a candid discussion of the three attributes in his work, *General Principles of Literature and History*, thus: "It is not easy for one to be able to command any of the three attributes, and extremely rare for one to be in command of all three. ... Without understanding a historian cannot determine the principles in history, without ability he cannot express himself in cogent writings, and without knowledge he cannot practise the business of historiography." Those who have read Professor Hsu's books and listened to his lectures will agree that he is a rare historian who is fully in possession of the three attributes, one who, in the presence of the vast and complex grandeur of historical studies, is able to determine its principles with accuracy, to practice its business with effectiveness, and to express his views and opinions in splendid writings. It may not be so difficult for us to identify, among the academics today and especially in the midst of historians, those who can determine principles accurately and practice business effectively, but one who carries these two attributes and who can also write with convincing elegance and flair are simply too few and far between. The writings of Professor Hsu are invariably a culmination of the knowledge, understanding and ability of the ideal historian, and sufficient evidence of his superior standing both as a historian and a man of letters.

If one cares to have a close reading of the voluminous academic output of Professor Hsu, then the reader will discover that the author has always adopted an objective attitude and maintained emotional impartiality in his writings. He always seeks to describe historical events and conflicts, however complicated and convoluted, in the most analytical and focused manner, being capable of saying what has not been said and discerned what has not been observed by others before. In these ways, Professor Hsu has put into practice another tenet of historiography propounded by Liu Zhiji: "If you love the object then you will discover its ugliness; if you hate it then you will observe its merits." At the launch party for his new book *Watching Tides of the Sea from the Mouth of the River*, Professor Hsu explained his attitude towards the study of history in further detail and lucidity, with a gentle nod to Liu Zhiji over the centuries: "A historian must force himself to be a bystander, and set his own anxiety, grief and sorrow aside. It is only by adopting such a stance that one may observe history with a calm mind." On this issue Professor Hsu also said that "the genuine intellectual's lot is not found in applause. His lot is in the work of extending the frontier of knowledge, in which he maintains a degree of scepticism which he satisfies through constant questioning and seeking." By

reviewing his time-honoured career in historical research, one may understand the severity of Professor Hsu's academic discipline, and how he adheres to the strict standards in historical research that he himself propounds.

Yet, to say that he is a historian who embraces the three attributes proposed by Liu Zhiji is an inadequate way to describe the merits of Professor Hsu, for he is a historian who possesses the fourth attribute. Apart from ability, knowledge and understanding, he also demonstrates the historian's ethics that Zhang Xuecheng greatly emphasized. He said, "What are the ethics? They are the intentions of the author in writing the book." ("On the Ethics of the Historian" in *General Principles of Literature and History*) We may look at Professor Hsu's ethics from two angles: first, when he tackles history in an academic context, he never gives empty praise or hides evils and only the most objective and detached viewpoint is applied to his subject. On the other hand, when he looks at history as a member of the human race, he is full of compassion and concern for the future of mankind: "At this time, when the stage curtains are down for scenes to be changed, we have no idea whether the next scene will be a comedy with progress of the human race as its theme, or a tragic act in which mankind moves towards decline and destruction ... I sincerely pray that our civilization, which has developed over several millennia, will not deteriorate to a state of untuned string and discord, but will reappear in the form of a brave new world with freedom and nature reigning supreme." (*Watching Tides of the Sea from the Mouth of the River*)

Professor Hsu Cho-yun has a close association with The Chinese University of Hong Kong which spans over several decades. As early as 1970, Professor Hsu was invited by the late Dr Choh-ming Li, our founding Vice-Chancellor, to give his valuable views and opinions on the development of higher education in Hong Kong. He was the Wei Lun Professor of History from 1991 to 1998 and Honorary Research Professor from 1998 to 2001, and made tremendous contributions to the University in these tenures. In 1991 Professor Hsu, at the invitation of New Asia College, gave the Ch'ien Mu Lecture in History and Culture of the year. In 1997 and 1999 he lent his great support to the two conferences on Chinese archaeology hosted by the History Department. In 2005 he spoke on the traditional Chinese concept on business in the Public Lectures on History and Business in China series jointly organized by the University's History Department and Asia-Pacific Institute of Business and the Central Library of the Hong Kong Government. In 2007 he was the first speaker in the Yu Ying-shih Lectures in History series organized by the History Department, New Asia College and Chung Chi College. Professor Hsu is a Director of the Chiang Ching Kuo Foundation for International Scholarly Exchange, and in that capacity gives staunch support to the Chinese University's efforts to promote China research both within the Asia-Pacific region and beyond. He was also instrumental in bringing about the collaboration of the Chinese University and the Chiang Ching Kuo Foundation, which

resulted in the establishment of the Asia-Pacific Centre for Chinese Studies at the Chinese University in 2006 for the promotion of collaborative and training efforts in China-related research in the region.

To recognize his outstanding achievements in advanced learning, and the significant contribution he has made to higher education in Hong Kong and to The Chinese University of Hong Kong in particular, Mr Chairman, I present Professor Hsu Cho-yun for the award of the degree of Doctor of Literature, *honoris causa*.