

The Power of Culture

Studies in Chinese Cultural History

PRESENTED IN HONOR OF
T.T. Ch'en and F.W. Mote
ON THE OCCASION OF THEIR RETIREMENT FROM THE
EAST ASIAN STUDIES DEPARTMENT OF
PRINCETON UNIVERSITY
MAY 1987

EDITED BY
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The Chinese University Press

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The Chinese University of Hong Kong

ISBN 962-201-596-4

THE CHINESE UNIVERSITY PRESS

The Chinese University of Hong Kong

Shatin, N.T., Hong Kong

Typeset by Birdtrack Press, New Haven, Connecticut, U.S.A.

Printed in Hong Kong

In Lieu of a Foreword

This is not a *festschrift*. It could not have been a *festschrift*, because the two men to whom it is affectionately dedicated, Professors Ch'en Ta-tuan and Frederick W. Mote, would not have looked with favor upon the harnessing of all this scholarly energy to so idolatrous a purpose as the cult of personality. It is not that they lack the requisite respect for the efficacy of ritual propriety, but that their native humility and sense of proportion would have outweighed the clamor of their admirers to do them homage. Nor would it have been entirely appropriate to attempt a summation of scholarly careers that are far indeed from exhausting their creative potential.

For these reasons, we decided at an early stage in the planning of this tribute to Fritz and T.T. to abandon the idea of assembling a *festschrift*, and concentrate instead on the staging of a *festspiel*, a symposium in celebration of the academic enterprise of two of the most widely respected scholars in the Sinological profession in this country and abroad. The planning necessitated a small measure of subterfuge, but fortunately our two guests of honor graciously cooperated by allowing us to believe that they were unaware of our machinations.

In selecting the participants for this gathering we faced a number of organizational hurdles. First of all, we immediately realized that the vast scope of learning covered by the work of Fritz and T.T. would have to be reduced to more finite proportions. If we were to try to take in all of the fields in which they have made major contributions, from comprehensive political history and Yuan-Ming cultural history, to food, urban design, and poetry; and from Ch'ing diplomatic history, Chinese linguistics and language pedagogy to opera, the conference would have become simply unmanageable. The best compromise we could devise was to call for a set of presentations under the general rubric of "cultural history", which in the broadest possible definition includes art history, literary history, and intellectual history, leaving only "straight" history and social history outside of our purview. We also arbitrarily limited topics to those prior to the nineteenth century. This meant excluding a number of individuals who by their scholarly debt and personal attachment to T.T. and Fritz would otherwise have been obvious participants. By divorcing the cultural historians from the political and social historians, we were, of course, in violation of the principle of 文史不分家; but financial and logistic limitations made this regrettable act of "house-splitting" unavoidable.

Still, the conference represented a cross-section of the members of the Sinological community most deeply influenced by Fritz and T.T. The participants in

two days of panels were Richard Barnhart, Thomas Bartlett, Derk Bodde, Peter Bol, Kang-i Sun Chang, Kwang-chih Chang, Chih-ping Chou, Ju-hsi Chou, Wen Fong, John Hay, Donald Holzman, Marius Jansen, Yu-kung Kao, Shuen-fu Lin, James T.C. Liu, Andrew Lo, Keith McMahon, Tsu-lin Mei, Earl Miner, Christian Murck, Willard Peterson, Rulan Chao Pien, Andrew Plaks, David Roy, Mary Scott, Shou-ch'ien Shih, Hai-t'ao Tang, Denis Twitchett, and Ying-shih Yü. Jao Tsung-yi's essay was not presented at the conference, but we are honored to be able to include it here. Above all else, it was a gathering of friends from around the globe united by their respect and affection for these two scholars. Could such a gathering of friends from afar, drawn by the scholarly ideals and vision of these masters of Chinese learning, have been anything but joyful?

For all the festive spirit of the occasion, however, each of us was under considerable pressure to come up with topics and treatment that would do justice to the demanding academic standards of Fritz and T.T., and to their patient efforts to train us to join them in the Sinological enterprise. Whether or not the papers assembled in this volume live up to those standards remains for the reader to judge.

A.H. Plaks

on behalf of the conference organizers:
Wen Fong, Yu-kung Kao, Willard Peterson
and Andrew Plaks, Spring 1988

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An Editorial Note

In this volume the romanization of Chinese words uses either the Pinyin or a modified Wade-Giles system, at the discretion of each chapter's author; in certain cases, such as persons' names and place names which have a customary English form, idiosyncratic or other unconventional usage has been allowed. Similarly, each author's preferences for the format of citations and bibliographic references have been accommodated to some extent because of the various disciplines involved, with the result that there are inconsistencies in annotation between chapters. Also, some authors thought it would be useful for readers to have the original texts accompany the translations; others were reserved in their use of Chinese characters, and again authors' preferences were observed.

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WILLARD J. PETERSON

Introduction

Given the diversity of topics and disciplinary approaches in the essays presented here, the reader may wonder whether there is no more connecting them than the celebratory occasion for which they were solicited. Indeed, the organizers adopted a broad rubric, Chinese cultural history, and presumed that the diversity of self defined approaches was to be preferred to any attempt to shed light on some common theme, assuming, that is, that the participants representing several academic disciplines could ever have agreed to some single, specific formulation of a theme to which all the papers could be addressed. There still apparently is no common theme, and each of the essays can and should be read autonomously for the factual information and interpretive points it contains. But when they are all taken together, there seems to be a recurrent problem threading through them all: how aspects of *wen* 文 were shaped over the centuries to respond to and influence the disposition of *te* 德.

This is not the place to sketch the multi-layered histories of these two concepts, nor to call in the authority of dictionary definitions or philosophers' analyses. For the purpose of discussing a thread in these essays, I propose to take the English word power, which I understand here to mean a capacity to affect others strongly, and apply that meaning back onto the Chinese word *te*. Without separating out moral from political, religious, and other aspects of *te*, and without requiring a separation of what we might call psychological from physical power, we may be able to recognize that a core characteristic of *te* is to be attractive in the sense that one can get or acquire or induce something by means of having this *te*. I propose that *wen* has no all purpose counterpart in English. On a relatively high level of abstraction, the word "culture" might suffice, but the essays themselves, which also can be called *wen*, internally impute to the word *wen* meanings such as symbol, pattern, lexical item, ornament, prose works, literature, written language, an other than military mode, the arts, cultured, and shared heritage. Some of the directions and dimensions of *wen* are revealed in the essays, and there is no need to confine or even define it in all of its ramifications. It must suffice to notice that there is a range of interrelated meanings.

Better than any definition we might impose, an example might start to illustrate a core of meaning for the phrase *wen te*. In the *Analects* (*Lun yü*, 16.1) an exchange is reported between Confucius and two of his followers, Jan Ch'iu and Tzu-lu. They have been serving as officers to the Chi family, which has been controlling the duchy of Lu, and they inform Confucius that the head of the Chi family has determined that Lu must take over the territory of Chuan Yü, an attached vassal state of the Duke of Lu. Citing a long-standing feudal service rendered by Chuan Yü to Lu, Confucius tells Jan Ch'iu that he would be criminally responsible if the attack takes place. When Jan Ch'iu tries to excuse himself and Tzu-lu by saying they do not want the attack, it is the wish of the head of the Chi family, Confucius tells Jan Ch'iu he has made himself responsible by taking service with the Chi family. Citing the saying that one who has the strength joins the ranks, and one who does not remains behind, Confucius tells Jan Ch'iu he is obligated to save his lord from a misstep; he cannot pretend his lord is walking by himself. Desperate, Jan Ch'iu argues that long-term strategic considerations require the attack as Chuan Yü could threaten Chi family interests in later generations. Confucius shows his contempt for this futile effort to condone a plan which Jan Ch'iu has already declared he opposes. Confucius then makes his case against the proposed resort to military solutions. Citing the wisdom that the ideal ruler concerns himself with the equitable portioning of goods and unity among those he rules, Confucius implies this policy would bring domestic tranquillity. Recognizing there still may be external threats posed by neighboring states, Confucius urges that the ruler must attract them by enhancing his *wen te*, and when they have been thus attracted, he makes them content. This policy is thus the means to ensure peace with one's neighbors. Using the weapons of war only would exacerbate divisions and turmoil within Lu and, Confucius reminds Jan Ch'iu, within the gates of the Chi family.

This passage in the *Analects* is the *locus classicus* for the phrase *wen te*. Of course there is no unanimity among commentators and translators on how to read it. At the least Confucius seems to mean that *wen* and *te*, or the *te* of *wen*, or a *wen-ish te*, can be cultivated and can attract others by influencing them to come. There is the further implication that officials in serving their lord are obliged to promote *wen te* for his and the general good. We might infer, then, that a characteristic of *wen* is a capacity to affect others by other than military means, and it is this capacity which in English I call the power of culture.

The explicit notion of *wen* in some broad sense having a power must go back at least to the Duke of Chou if not to the well named King Wen himself. It still finds expression in the twentieth century in the New Culture movement of the May 4th period and the so-called Great Proletarian Culture Revolution initiated in the 1960s. For better or worse, culture has been perceived to have power. The common problem in these essays is how *wen* was generated and manipulated at

certain periods by different individuals for their several purposes, particularly to have an effect on others.

In his essay on Shang shamans (*wu*), K.C. Chang establishes a connection between the capacity to engage in certain cultural activities and the capacity to exercise non-military power over others. Most of the earliest writing (*wen*) now known was involved with communicating with divinities, and this capacity to communicate directly enhanced the power of rulers. The shamans' "mastery of heaven and earth," symbolized in K.C. Chang's explication of the written form of *wu* in bronze inscriptions and on oracle bones, was accomplished through the manipulation of the square-rule and other paraphernalia which in twentieth-century language may be called cultural artifacts (*wen wu*). As he shows, during the Shang dynasty shamans were at least the collaborators of the royal house, and at times their functions were taken over by members of the royal house, even the king himself. Although the powers of Shang shamans may not have been what Confucius had in mind when he spoke of the ruler's need to develop *wen te*, theirs is a clear example of the power of culture being at the disposal of those with political power. In his use of visual as well as literary material produced long after the fall of the Shang kings, K.C. Chang implicitly demonstrates that the shaman's capacities continued to be the object of wonder, whether the evidence is read literally or rhetorically. To be able to inspire awe, then, can be taken as an aspect of the power of *wen* in general and words in particular.

The power of words is acknowledged in quite different ways in the essays by Tsu-lin Mei and Shuen-fu Lin. Adapting the concept of the morphology of words from linguistics, Mei shows how clues about the development of ideas can be discovered in the evidence of changes in language. A pertinent example involves the verb *t'ing* 聽, to listen to or to hear. (One can imagine the likes of Wang An-shih inventing an etymology for this word: the power of the king's ear.) With the acquisition of a prefix **s-*, another idea was expressed: good at listening or keen in hearing. This idea gravitated from being a desirable attribute of the king in deciding complaints after giving them a hearing (*t'ing*) to being a noun for the best sort of ruler of all. It came to be written 聖 *sheng* and particularly denoted ideal rulers who were sagacious and who achieved the categorical distinction which is generally rendered into English as "sage." The word thus changed from being a hopeful description of the ideal king into an ideological prop for emperors. As the word took on power, it came to be arrogated by those with power.

Words having power, that is, having a capacity to influence other humans' conduct, is presumed in many texts from the *Analects* on. The presumption is central to the so-called doctrine of the rectification of names (*cheng ming* 正名), as articulated, for example, in the *Hsun tzu*. Shuen-fu Lin's essay shows that certain modes of saying (*yen* 言) in the *Chuang-tzu* are central to an attempt to be free from the

tyranny of words. Ordinary language, distinctions, preconceptions, and meanings are jumbled and disordered in the Inner Chapters. The irony is that Chuang Tzu's use of *wen* in order to attack the constraints of conventional language and thinking ended up sometimes being incarcerated as "literature," to use Lin's word.

The essay on Ssu-ma Ch'ien's intentions in compiling the *Records of the Grand Historian* (*Shih chi*) attempts to show that he sought to establish something which might be called the cultural tradition as a source and expression of *te* which would be an alternative to the political powers being accumulated in the hands of an emperor who posthumously was named *wu* 武, martial. Later, Ssu-ma Ch'ien's model was routinely co-opted by imperial governments interested in controlling what was being presented as history, a tacit confirmation of the power accorded to the historical record. Ssu-ma Ch'ien was writing at a time of a strong, centralizing, unifying imperial government. Two or three hundred years later, in the second century of the common era, against the background of the political turmoil surrounding the fall of the Han dynasty, a new poetic mode was developed.

In his consideration of the Nineteen Old Poems by authors who are now anonymous, Yu-kung Kao points to the emergence of a new aesthetic, characterized by poems which reflect in on themselves, revealing the poet's own individual inner experience. For them, creating the poem was an act of contemplation, without any presumption of a need for communicating or expressing for the sake of an audience, even though others might be allowed to overhear the poet in what Kao calls his safe-haven. This is a form of *wen* in which the personal rather than the shared had primacy. In Kao's formulation, in the new aesthetics "personal creation gives meaning to life in what is thought to be a period of cultural crisis." Here *wen* is not so much an attribute of those with power as a means of empowering an individual who is in a sense isolated from government but participatory in culture.

A similar inference can be drawn from Donald Holzman's essay. Examining poems from roughly the same period, Holzman takes a thematic approach, while Kao's is generic. Holzman argues that the *hsien*, which he translates conventionally as immortals, had been a theme drawn from contemporary beliefs to be used in poems either to represent mystical experience or an allegory for frustrated retreat from the injustices and corruptions of service as an official. Holzman finds that in the changed political and intellectual atmosphere of the third century, poets were beginning to develop the theme of immortals to express their search for personal salvation and to abandon emphasizing the contribution of *wen* to the task of governing. Both Kao and Holzman see poetry, a form of *wen* to be sure, change in response to changes in political power, with poets themselves finding new power in new literary expression.

John Hay points out in his wide-ranging essay that *lung* (or dragon, as the word is conventionally translated) became one of the oldest and most enduring images

in Chinese culture. The image of the *lung* was an anonymous, slowly evolving cultural creation. Hay argues that the power to make images had the reciprocal effect of enhancing the power of the image makers, or those who were established as the makers of powerful images; the relatively late stories assigning the invention of writing (*wen*) to sage culture heroes would be a parallel example. By association with the images of *lung*, the position of kings and emperors was perceived to be strengthened, but the *lung* were never tamed or restricted only to imperial purposes. They came to serve as a potent icon within the culture. *Lung* were used as the imagined particularization of concepts referring to processes and structures which found expression in such diverse modes as medicine and landscape painting, everyday speech and cosmologic speculation, the power of the brush and the power of social relations. The image of the *lung* replicated awesome power, whether latent or manifest. The *lung* were images created by humans; they were cultural artifacts which took on a life, so to speak, of their own. As John Hay presents the case, the *lung* were an icon of the culture itself.

Long-hidden artifacts from the T'ang dynasty which were uncovered in 1987 at the Fa-men temple near Hsi-an in Shensi are discussed by Jao Tsung-i. This temple was the recipient of imperial largess through most of the T'ang period, and it was continued even after Han Yü, in the name of Our Culture (*ssu-wen*), denounced Hsien-tsung (r. 806–820) for welcoming the procession from the temple parading its relic, the Buddha's bone. An imperial donation in 871 not only resulted in a stone inscription listing the gifts, but also an inscription written by a monk to commemorate the occasion and add to the temple's prestige. The names of author, calligrapher, and associated dignitaries commonly were inscribed with the record of the events, and Jao uses newly discovered inscriptions along with ones previously preserved and published to correct or supplement earlier historians' accounts. He also found passages in later Buddhist and lay sources which describe or explain the use of some of the artifacts, in particular a silver box and a ewer. The artifacts had writing on them, and Jao correlates these with other written accounts to show the connection with esoteric ceremonies of reciting spells. As part of T'ang culture, Buddhists' use of texts (*wen*) in all of this is pervasive.

The argument presented by Ying-shih Yü emphasizes a breakthrough in the T'ang-Sung period in the development of the cultural heritage. Along with important social, political, and economic changes in the ninth to twelfth centuries, there were changes in intellectual outlook which Yü characterizes as a broad turn from "other-worldly" to "this-worldly" (in Max Weber's terms). Some of the impetus for the change was generated within the Ch'an Buddhist movement, and the breakthrough was not completed until the twelfth century, when a new, non-Buddhist "metaphysical vision of the transcendent reality" was fully articulated. With reference to the theme of the power of culture, it may be noticed that some of the

impetus for the breakthrough was provided early in the ninth century by Han Yü. As Ying-shih Yü points out, one of Han Yü's critical contributions was the reassertion of the importance of the cultural heritage as it was transmitted from Yao and Shun through Confucius and Mencius. Han Yü sought to do this in part by promoting a change in the style of writing, a revival of the so-called "ancient style of prose" (*ku-wen* 古文) which implied much more. It represented the ancient culture.

Well before the eleventh century, the ability to produce highly accomplished writing (*wen*) was perceived to bestow power on the possessor of that ability. In Northern Sung, such men, whom we can readily refer to as literati (*shih*), reached the highest levels of government. This direct access to substantive political power by literati, who by the new definition had *wen*, meant that *wen* was subject to politically motivated criticism. Peter Bol shows Ch'eng Yi attacking the premise that selection of officials should be based on learning literary composition and canonical commentaries, which were required for the civil examinations. Ch'eng disputed the claim that a true understanding of the norms of morality could be derived from studying the past, not even from studying the written legacy of the sages. These were external, cultural forms. They were text based. Instead of endorsing the idea that ethical and political power were by-products of accomplishments in *wen*, Ch'eng Yi reformulated the concept that morality, epitomized by becoming sagely in one's own life, had to be developed from each person's nature. In this sense, the power of culture (*wen*) was being diminished by Ch'eng Yi in favor of ethical behavior rooted in transcendent, universal values.

At about the same time that Ch'eng Yi was formulating his ideas about the foundations of morality, which were later incorporated with such effect into Chu Hsi's teachings, another intellectual shift was being manifested in landscape painting during the last third of the eleventh century. In his essay centering on Kuo Hsi and Wang Shen, Richard Barnhart points to the emergence of landscapes which are amorphous and mysterious rather than hierarchically organized. Instead of expressing a vision of imperial order, the paintings now represent personal encounters with mountains and water on which humans have not imposed themselves. The actual or implied figure of the wandering, drifting literatus in a vast, insecure landscape is linked by Barnhart to the reality of political exile experienced from 1080 by Wang Shen and by his most celebrated contemporary creator of *wen*, Su Shih. The political climate was changing in the last decades of the eleventh century. As Barnhart shows most economically with a specific example, this was another moment when *wen* underwent a displacement from the center of power and the power of the center, but in the process gave new power to the individual painter. Landscape painting was never the same.

Four centuries later, an example of imperially sponsored order in *wen* is

presented to us in Andrew Plaks' consideration of some of the literary and cultural qualities in the Ming *pa ku* examination essay. He cites some of the contemporary and later critics who, whether positive or negative in their assessment of the *pa ku* form, are unanimous in viewing it as a major expression of Ming culture. The theme in the essay by Wang Ao which Plaks analyzes is that moral cultivation must be an endeavor shared with others. In Wang's argument, the *chün-tzu* who is morally cultivated has a magnetic power; his attracting and transforming others is proof of his power. On another level, the *pa ku* essay form itself had a transforming power, in effect attracting and uniting the literati who submitted to the rigors of learning to express themselves through the structure of its *wen*. Social and political power were confirmed on those who could do so. Those who could not had to look elsewhere.

The group of painters considered in Shou-chien Shih's essay includes some who could not write *pa ku* essays to their examiner's satisfaction. Shih discusses how certain literati, even some whose talents received widespread recognition from their peers, retreated to Soochow (or Suchou) and Nanking in the second quarter of the sixteenth century, when the imperial court was in turmoil. They were frustrated over repeatedly failing to pass examinations or to fulfill their ambitions of meaningful service in the government. Wen Cheng-ming was the central figure of the group. Surviving the demise of most of the earlier eminent leaders of Soochow culture, Wen supplied a new force and direction to *wen jen hua*, the painting of "men of wen" (*wen jen* 文人). As cogently analyzed by Shou-chien Shih, the style of landscape Wen created was an expression of as well as a means to spiritual cultivation. He and his coterie could lose themselves in the complicated landscapes they painted, almost as the authors of the Nineteen Old Poems created what Yü-kung Kao called their "safe-haven." The initial power of Wen's style dissipated when it attracted patrons and imitators, but for a few decades some of the frustrated talents in Soochow found an outlet in creating cultural monuments which still can move their viewers.

Wu Wei-yeh was frustrated by a different obstacle. He had passed the highest examinations at a young age and he had a career in the government opening before him. But then the Ming dynasty fell. Subsequently Wu used his writing to witness the suffering, sorrow, and solitude he felt. For political reasons the anguish had to be hidden, or masked, to use Kang-i Sun Chang's word. The mask of another persona, which he could adopt in his poetry, empowered Wu, whether to convey his regret over the collapse of his relationship with a courtesan under the Ming dynasty, or to manifest his loyalty and defend himself against those who thought he had been compromised by serving in the Ch'ing government. Wu Wei-yeh's motive for turning to *wen* and the mode he chose were not the same as Wen Cheng-ming's, but both men found in it the power to affect others.

Compilation of collectanea was an act involving *wen*. Andrew Lo focuses on two collectanea projects, begun and published in the K'ang-hsi period by two literati who seem to have found more than pleasure in preserving what some might call cultural marginalia. One of them, Wang Cho, was explicit that he was excluding what he called great or long works (*ta wen*). Some of the items included must be reckoned as scholarly, but parodies and burlesques, idle chats and jokes, jottings on drinking and gambling games, these are not the usual stuff of politically useful or morally uplifting *wen*. Some later compilers made a point of being apologetic about such trivia, but among the authors who were included are some of the most impressive scholarly and literary names in Ming and Ch'ing. As Lo points out, one of the effects of the compilations is to provide a record of networks of literati associations. "Playing" together, whether by actually meeting or by being juxtaposed in the collectanea, was a means of establishing literati solidarity, especially when the ostensibly more serious, formal meetings of literati which had been characteristic through the sixteenth century were regarded with suspicion under the Ch'ing. Seen in conjunction with the creation of the Nineteen Old Poems, the landscapes of Wang Shen in Northern Sung, and the Soochow style of Wen Cheng-ming, the amusement literature represented the continuing possibility for men outside of government to create *wen* of their own which was also outside the dictates of those in government, whether it was strong or weak, interfering or indifferent. It may also be observed that card playing, which is the extended example Andrew Lo discovers for us, was accessible to "sedan-chair carriers and servants" as well as to literati and officials. Writings about card games and other pursuits which were shared with commoners considerably widened the boundaries of *wen*.

Shrewish women and intimidated men in some fiction pieces from late Ming and early Ch'ing discussed by Keith McMahon can be taken to personify disorder. The disorder was in individuals and in households, and also by implication in the larger social world as well. Issues involving the proper disposition of power and the need for order in the relations between husbands and wives can be seen to have parallels with the same issues involving failingly weak and vacillating Ming emperors and then later excessively domineering Ch'ing emperors in their relations with their officials. In the ethic of the stories, privilege requires responsibility, and abuse necessitates revenge. Even without reading the fictional sexual struggles as political allegory, these *hsiao shuo* as literature were subversive of established *wen*. In their language and subject, old orders are turned upside down or inside out, even when the possibility is held out that order might be restored.

Order was a desideratum shared by the painter-theorists of the Ch'ien-lung era reviewed by Ju-hsi Chou. Characteristically, there was a desire to belong rather than to express alienation, and to maintain order rather than overthrow it. Eccentricities and antagonisms were modulated. At the same time there was a