



Profiles of

100

Chinese
Academics



FOREIGN LANGUAGES PRESS

图书在版编目 (CIP) 数据

走进中国 100 位院士的家: 英文 / 《钱江晚报》主编, 翻译李磊、周晓刚等
北京: 外文出版社, 2008 年

ISBN 978-7-119-05559-6

I. 走... II. ①钱... III. 院士-生平事迹-中国-英文... IV. K826.1
中国版本图书馆 CIP 数据核字 (2008) 第 177182 号

责任编辑: 兰佩瑾 文 芳 蔡跃蕾

英文翻译: 李 磊 周晓刚等

英文审定: Paul White 王明杰

设 计: 元 青等

印刷监制: 张国祥

走进中国 100 位院士的家

© 2008 外文出版社

出版发行:

外文出版社 (中国北京百万庄大街 24 号)

邮政编码: 100037

网址: <http://www.flp.com.cn>

电话: 008610-68320579 (总编室)

008610-68995852 (发行部)

008610-68327750 (版权部)

印刷:

北京外文印刷厂

开本: 720mm × 1020mm 1/16 印张: 18

2008 年第 1 版第 1 次印刷

(英文)

ISBN 978-7-119-05559-6

11800 (平)

17-E-6830S

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FOREIGN LANGUAGES PRESS

First Edition 2008

ISBN 978-7-119-05559-6

© Foreign Languages Press, Beijing, China, 2008

Published by Foreign Languages Press

24 Baiwanzhuang Road, Beijing 100037, China

<http://www.flp.com.cn>

Distributed by China International Book Trading Corporation

35 Chegongzhuang Xilu, Beijing 100044, China

P.O. Box 399, Beijing, China

Printed in the People's Republic of China

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Preface

On China's road to prosperity and modernization, "academicians" are an extraordinary group.

In China, the word "academician" refers to members of the Chinese Academy of Sciences and Chinese Academy of Engineering. They are the outstanding representatives of science, technology and engineering in China. Academician is a permanent honorary academic title. Academicians are elected from elite scientists in China and abroad every two years, based on recommendation. Usually the nominee should be the recipient of an award higher than National Award for Science and Technology Progress (Grade 2) or National Award for Natural Sciences (Grade 2). The first 81 members of the Academic Committee (their title was changed in 1994 to "academician") were selected in March 1948 by the state. In 1955 the Chinese Academy of Sciences began to appoint academicians. In 1994 the Chinese Academy of Engineering began to do the same. From 1955 to 2007 more than 1,800 academicians were chosen, among whom nearly 100 were foreign academicians.

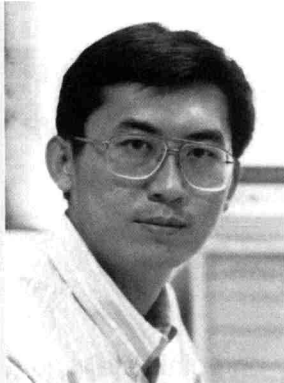
The academicians' achievements in scientific research are, naturally, outstanding. However, when we look at their everyday lives we discover a unique combination of patriotism and scientific spirit, ambition and practical approach, record-breaking ad-

vances and simple character, noble dignity and plain life, and a romantic yet realistic attitude. This book contains the records of interviews made by reporters of 100 academicians in their homes.

In this book we hope to open a window for readers to get to know academicians' lives and personal charm. Therefore we avoided an overall, concrete description of academicians' experiences and achievements. Through the interviews we hope to display the academicians' values, attitudes to life and personalities. The 100 academicians interviewed are engaged in different fields of research, and their characters are all different. Nevertheless, we found that their values and attitudes to life are the same.

What we want to present are not monotonous portraits, but vivid, humorous and personal reflections of academicians' lives. The reporters wrote not complex accounts of scientific research, but personal stories about the academicians. Each interview is preceded by a brief introduction to the life experience and scientific achievements of the interviewee.

Although every academician's profile does not take up many pages, we hope to display accurately the academicians' scientific and humanistic spirit through the articles and pictures.



Lu Ke: Competitive Young Academician

Materials scientist. Born in Huachi, Gansu Province, in 1965, Lu Ke received a Ph.D. from the Institute of Metal Research, Chinese Academy of Sciences, in 1990. His major fields of interest include research on nanostructured materials and metastable materials. He revised the orientation relationship of crystallization product of Ni-P amorphous alloy and proposed a new crystallization mechanism for amorphous alloy. For the latter discovery he received the Top Award of the President's Scholarship of Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS) in 1989. In 2001 Lu Ke was nominated director of the Institute of Metallurgical Research. In November 2003 he was elected a member of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, at the age of 38. In March 2004 he was named Young Chinese Scientist of the Year. In April 2005 Lu Ke was elected a member of the German Academy of Natural Scientists Leopoldina.

Lu Ke started earlier than other people in many things, but he says he is not a genius.



Delight in material science

“I am not a genius; there are historical reasons for my success,” Lu said, explaining that his generation grew up after the “cultural revolution” (1966-1976), when there was an acute shortage of qualified personnel.

Lu applied to be an academician three times, and only on the third application was he successful. As young as 33 years old, he thought that he was qualified to be an academician. He graduated from college when he was 20 years old, obtained his Ph.D. when he was 25, became a researcher at 28, a supervisor of Ph.D. students at 30 and director of a key state laboratory at 32. Lu Ke was promoted to the directorship of the Institute of Metallurgical Research at the age of 35.

The Institute of Metallurgical Research is a major scientific establishment with a history of more than 50 years. There are more than 800 staff members, more than 800 retirees and more than 500 post-graduate students. It’s like a small society in itself.

Lu Ke developed a new method to produce

nanostructured materials: the crystallization of amorphous alloys, and it has been adopted worldwide.

In 2002, Lu Ke and his research group discovered that nanostructured copper has superplastic extensibility at room temperature, and the length of hair-shaped nanostructured copper can be extended 100 times. This discovery was named as one of the ten Chinese scientific and technological achievements of the year.

“At a big banquet, people may praise the skill of the chef, but rarely do they think of how the pig and sheep were reared,” Lu Ke said. “As materials scientists, we are like the farmers who rear pigs and sheep.”

He added, “I am very lucky to be engaged in a research field which draws worldwide attention.” Indeed, Chinese materials science is lucky to have the enthusiastic Lu Ke

At a seminar



in this field.

Lu Ke seems to be a born scientist. As graduate student he had great potential for scientific research: He was broad-minded, and possessed of great determination and confidence. At the end of 1984, when he was preparing for the graduate school entrance exam, the TV series *The Eagle-hunting Heroes* was very popular. But while other students gave up watching the series to prepare for the exam Lu Ke watched every episode.

The 19-year-old introverted young man had patience, a focused aim

and a practical approach. Since that time, he has had a rigid timetable and work plan by which he has been abiding for 20 years. He still works until 10 p.m. every day.

As the director of the Institute of Metallurgical Research of CAS, he describes his job as that of leading a team.

Comment by Academician Lu Ke: “Scientific research always needs courage and a sense of adventure.”



A torchbearer of the Torch Relay of the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games

Ren Jianmin



Yuan Longping: Rejoicing in Boundless Rice Fields

Expert on hybrid rice. Born in Beijing in September 1930, Yuan Longping graduated from Southwest Agriculture Institute in 1953. In 1994 he was elected a member of the Chinese Academy of Engineering. He is now director-general of the China National Hybrid Rice R&D Center. He is the pioneer and leader in the field of hybrid rice research in China, being known as the “father of hybrid rice.” He won a Top National Invention Prize in 1981, Food Safety Guarantee Award from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in 1995, and State Supreme Science and Technology Award in 2000.

When talking about his experiences and attitude towards life, Yuan said, “When I was six years old, I visited a botanical garden in Wuhan. Gazing at the lush and vigorous trees decorated with fragrant flowers and fruits, I told myself that I wanted to learn agriculture. I have never

thought of living a luxurious life, and material enjoyment, because I do not have the time or energy to think about such things, but I have never been short of money. My work with super hybrid rice has been aimed at allowing China to feed itself. However, I also want the rest of the world to benefit from my efforts.” In fact 60% of China’s gross rice output consists of hybrid rice, which means that one in two bowls of rice are hybrid rice.

Yuan Longping has a lot of hobbies. He plays the violin, chess and card games. He swims regularly, and can even tap dance.

Comment by Academician Yuan: “Opportunity favors those who are prepared.”



Enjoying life at home

Zhang Liang

Father of hybrid rice

