

 PRINCETON UNIVERSITY

東亞圖書館
East Asian Library
and the *Gest Collection*

This title is provided ONLY for personal scholarly use. Any publication, reprint, or reproduction of this material is strictly forbidden, and the researcher assumes all responsibility for conforming with the laws of libel and copyright. Titles should be referred to with the following credit line:

© The East Asian Library and the Gest Collection, Princeton University

To request permission to use some material for scholarly publication, and to apply for higher-quality images, please contact gestcirc@princeton.edu, or

**The East Asian Library and the Gest Collection
33 Frist Campus Center, Room 317
Princeton University
Princeton, NJ 08544
United States**

A fee may be involved (usually according to the general rules listed on <http://www.princeton.edu/~rbsc/research/rights.html>).

Thomas Bartlett, "Vale, Magister: Reflections on the Integrity of Pre-modern Chinese Humanism", The East Asian Library Journal 12, no. 1 (2006): 13-19, accessed January 14, 2017, https://library.princeton.edu/eastasian/EALJ/bartlett_thomas.EALJ.v12.n01.p013.pdf

Vale, Magister
Reflections on the Integrity of
Pre-modern Chinese Humanism

THOMAS BARTLETT

G*ehwey laoshy, gehwey shyuejaang* (Respected teachers and senior colleagues). Good morning, ladies and gentlemen, and friends. If I seem slightly nervous at this moment, it is probably because the last time I addressed a group that included my teachers at Princeton, it was at the oral defense of my doctoral thesis. When Perry Link invited me to join today's panel on "Language Learning and Cultural Learning," he asked me what I thought Professor Mote's principal contribution to language teaching had been. I was very gratified when Perry approved my response, that our teacher opened our awareness to the concept and the living reality of *wen shyy bu fenjia*, meaning "literature and history do not divide their patrimony," as Professor Mote has translated it.

This phrase is widely recognized among educated Chinese as expressing the integrity and coherence of China's humanistic culture. In Princeton's Chinese curriculum, as eloquently described by Mr. T'ang Hai-t'ao last evening, the phrase might even be expanded to *yan wen shyy bu fenjia*, that is "language, literature, and history do not divide their patrimony," making more explicit the critical early phase of oral language learning, provided here for students who have not grown up

speaking Chinese as their primary language. Professor Mote's own personal example of this vision gave us a living model to emulate—as the Chinese phrase puts it, *yii shen tzuoh tzer*. In a most fundamental sense, his greatest contribution was himself.

Only many years later, when I taught Chinese at other universities, did I encounter the notion that, as one instructor relentlessly insisted, “Language is merely a tool.” I regretfully came to understand that she was not just being modest; although a bright person, she was genuinely committed to a stunted, functionalist view of language pedagogy. For this reason, I have for many years often thanked whatever guardian spirit guided my way to Princeton Graduate School in 1965, where I began to learn Chinese.

At that time, the latest fashionable controversy raging in the *Journal of Asian Studies*, under the name “Sinology and the Disciplines,” tended to reduce “Sinology” to a kind of pedantic and antiquarian philological exercise. Professor Mote wrote a strong rebuttal, affirming the “Integrity of Sinology” and insisting that Chinese civilization must be viewed within a broad and inclusive perspective, and through the deepest possible comprehension of the spoken and written Chinese language.

In my first year at Princeton, I attended Professor Mote's lectures in early Chinese history and also his lectures in first year modern Chinese language. Our language text was *Mandarin Primer*, the book from which Professor Mote himself learned Chinese in Y. R. Chao's classes. The volume which I am now displaying before you is the very copy of *Mandarin Primer* that I used then; it is now rebound in a replacement cover, and I still keep it within arm's reach of my writing desk. (See Figure 1.)

Those of us who began Chinese through *Mandarin Primer* will surely agree that it presents a distinctively natural yet elegant style of the modern spoken language. One of *Mandarin Primer*'s few thoughtful detractors has, with tendentious exaggeration, described it as “a text written by a genius for use by geniuses.” Be that as it may, we were no doubt extraordinarily fortunate to be led by Professor Mote through lesson texts like the delightful fantasies of “Ig ianchiual” (A Smoke Ring), “Tarn Butyng Shg.” (Mr. Can't Stop Talking), and “Wuwoei

ex libris

J. C. Bartlett

Princeton

Autumn 1965.

Mandarin Primer

An Intensive Course in SPOKEN CHINESE

Yuen Ren Chao

Yuen Ren Chao

Published By

HARVARD UNIVERSITY PRESS · CAMBRIDGE

LONDON: OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

1964

1. Owner's inscription and title page of Thomas Bartlett's copy of Yuen Ren Chao, *Mandarin Primer, An Intensive Course in Spoken Chinese* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press and London: Oxford University Press, 1964).

shuu” (A Tailless Rat). The playful and humorous intelligence of those texts, amplified by Professor Mote’s nuanced learning and whimsical wit, gave us beginners a very palpable and attractive sense of some typical stylistic traits of the language as spoken by well educated modern Chinese.

Some years later, when once speaking Chinese at Princeton among a group that included several of our language teachers, I happened to refer casually to one of the famous four classic Chinese novels, using a common colloquial abbreviation, *SanGwo YeanYih* (Romance of the Three Kingdoms). Hearing this, Professor Mote’s face darkened perceptibly, it seemed, and he addressed me with a quietly emphatic comment, which I hope passed unnoticed by others present but which, I realized upon reflection, was a gentle rebuke. Evidently I had not learned well enough *Mandarin Primer’s* Lesson 23, in which that novel’s proper name is introduced as *SanGwo Jyh YeanYih*.

In response to the anxiety which I am still prone to sense at recalling this episode, I can only say that it was not in Professor Mote’s class that I read that particular lesson. Rather, it was in much more hurried circumstances late in a ten-week intensive summer course at Middlebury College. But further reflection also leads me to the thought that, as usual, Professor Mote’s point was not a trivial or pedantic one at all. In fact, I had done nothing less than to obscure the pivotally ambiguous *jyh* in the novel’s proper title. This is a considerable omission, since *jyh* not only signifies the name of the standard history from which the novel is drawn, but also implies the virtuous aspirations that motivate the protagonists in the fictional version of those historical events. Professor Mote was calling to my attention the indispensable role of such aspirations, which bind together and mutually invigorate the popular and elite streams of Chinese historical awareness.

Speaking of Middlebury’s Chinese Summer School recalls to mind Professor Mote’s initiative, together with Professor Ch’en Ta-tuan, to propose that Middlebury College add Chinese to the roster of its well-established intensive summer language programs. Professor Mote gave Middlebury College its Chinese name, *MingDer*, a felicitously inspired epithet whose Confucian inflection, meaning “illustrious virtue,” confers on that institution a unique distinction among American colleges and universities (comparing not unfavorably even to a name such as “Laugh-

ing Buddha”). The director of the opening session in 1966 was Professor Liu Chün-jo, while Professor Lao Yen-hsüan lectured on Chinese history, and Professor Kao Yu-kung taught advanced Chinese literature. James and Anne Pusey, who are with us today, were then instructors in our conversation classes, and Perry Link studied in the third year course, which introduced the classical literary language.

At the close of the ten-week session, the director, Professor Liu, congratulated us on our good progress. But, like a good teacher, she immediately cautioned us against sophomoric conceit, and she then pronounced the weighty and memorable admonition, “*Baa Jongwen shyuehao sh ibeytz de shyh.chyng*” (Mastering Chinese is a lifetime’s work). The seriousness of this standard was unmistakably impressive, and it has continued both to inspire and console me over the years, although my own experience suggests that the time frame should be expanded to *jyhshao ibeytz* (at least one lifetime). *Ars longa, vita brevis*.

In the later phase of my study at Princeton, I undertook, with Professor Mote’s encouragement and guidance, a research project on the thought of Gu Yanwu (1613–1682), a scholar who traveled widely in north and south China. As I learned, Gu’s scholarly persona and legacy exemplify in high degree the essential spirit of the principle that “language, literature and history do not divide their patrimony.” Living in a time of inter-dynastic disorder, Gu stressed the importance of normative personal relations being cultivated among educated people. And Gu evidently hoped that his own efforts to reconstruct lost ancient pronunciations might lead contemporary readers of the classics to a more vivid and harmonious appreciation of Confucian ideals.

In particular, Gu Yanwu rejected enforced imposition of an artificial standard of language by fiat. He wrote,

Although the speech of the central region and the four quarters are each different from the other, nevertheless to make people speak with a [standard] pronunciation based on a single locality, in their associations throughout the world, is not what a true scholar would prefer.

Rather, Gu’s standard for linguistic community was based on shared authentic values, and he cites references to this awareness in the thought

of Confucius and Mencius. Gu also emphatically notes that the scholar and official Yan Zhitui (531–*ca.* 590) refused to allow his sons to study with a teacher who spoke with non-standard accents. Gu concludes that “to communicate with people of virtuous aspirations throughout the world, one must begin from their spoken words” (*Tong tianshiah jy jyh, bih tzyh chyi fayan shyy*).

Gu Yanwu’s writings contain repeated reference to the word *torngjyh*, a genuine classical expression adopted for rhetorical effect by modern revolutionaries. At the oral defense of my research thesis, Professor Ch’en Ta-tuan made trenchant criticisms of some of my translations, but he encouragingly approved my rendering “like-minded persons,” in preference to “comrades.”

We are gathered here today to remember and honor the life and work of a man whose character and mind have, whether as teacher or colleague, but always as friend, exerted a strong and abiding influence in our lives. Faced now with the sharp regret of his passing, we are reassured by our awareness that the gift of his presence remains, recognizable even in some of our familiar habits and tastes.

The breadth of Professor Mote’s interests was extraordinary, but without being diffuse or disjointed. Rather, the well rounded scope and completeness of his personality has shown a living example of true humaneness, primarily expressed through his vision of Chinese civilization, but by no means parochially limited to that alone. For all that, his personal humility remains, I think, the most persuasive and challenging lesson he offered us. Even the few who dissented from his vision of China nevertheless respectfully acknowledged the virtue of his commitment to it.

Surely, few people who ever knew Professor Mote would fail to cherish his inspired sense of humor. I came to Chinese studies after an undergraduate major in Greek and Latin literature, sometimes grandiloquently known as “The Classics.” So, coming to know Professor Mote, I began to think of Granby as a place situated somewhere on the farther slope of Mount Olympus, a region not revealed by Homer’s Muse and untraversed by Herodotus. Our teacher’s jovial nature embodied a balanced model of “Roman laughter”—jocose and occasionally earthy, without saturnalian intemperance. When one day he invited me to

accompany him to a lecture on late Roman furniture, my vestigial New England instincts were strained. But gradually I became aware of a liberating Chinese cultural type, which Professor Mote introduced to us by the name “the old rogue,” a veteran survivor whose canny mastery of the Tao evidently fulfilled Aristotle’s dictum, “a young man who cannot weep is a barbarian; an old man who cannot laugh is a fool.”

When I saw Professor and Mrs. Mote in Colorado one bright August morning three years ago, they were as warmly welcoming as ever. His grip was firm, his gaze bright and searching, and his voice as richly resonant as I remember it being four decades ago, when he taught our elementary Mandarin classes and we first learned to pronounce the word *laoshy* (teacher).

GLOSSARY

Baa Jongwen shyuehao sh ibeytz de shyh. chyng (Ba Zhongwen xuehao shi yibeizi de shiqing) 把中文學好是一輩子的 事情	<i>SanGwo YeanYih</i> (<i>Sanguo yanyi</i>) 三國演義
Gehwey laoshy, gehwey shyuejaang (gewei laoshi, gewei xuezhang) 各位老師各 位學長	Tarn Butyng Shg. (Tanbuting xiansheng) 談不停先生
Ig ianchiual (Yige yanquanr) 一個煙圈兒	tong tianshiah jy jyh, bih tzyh chyi fayan shyy (tong tianxia zhi zhi, bi zi qi fayan shi) 通天下之志, 必自其發言始
jyh (zhi) 志	torngjyh (tongzhi) 同志
jyhshao ibeytz (zhishao yibeizi) 至少一 輩子	wenshyy bu fenjia (wenshi bu fenjia) 文史不分家
laoshy (laoshi) 老師	Wuwoei shuu (Wu wei shu) 無尾鼠
MingDer (Mingde) 明德	yanwenshyy bu fenjia (yanwenshi bu fenjia) 言文史不分家
<i>SanGwo Jyh YeanYih</i> (<i>Sanguo zhi yanyi</i>) 三國志演義	yii shen tzuoh tzer (yi shen zuo ze) 以身 作則