

PREFACE

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Professor Tsuen-Hsuein Tsien formally retired from his positions as professor in the Department of Far Eastern Languages and Civilizations and curator of the Far Eastern Library of the University of Chicago in 1978. In that same year, half a continent away, I entered graduate school. I soon came to know the name and the work of Professor Tsien, first through reading his then already classic *Written on Bamboo and Silk: The Beginnings of Chinese Books and Inscriptions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), and then through using his *China: An Annotated Bibliography of Bibliographies* (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1978). A young man still in my mid-twenties, I never imagined that I would someday meet and come to know Professor Tsien, much less that I would have the honor to contribute this preface to a collection of his English-language articles.

I arrived at the University of Chicago in the autumn of 1985, and almost immediately met Professor Tsien, or T.H., as most of his friends call him. Even though his still more monumental volume, *Paper and Printing*, for Joseph Needham's *Science and Civilisation in China* had just been published, Professor Tsien was still a daily presence at the library, the contents of which he knew like the back of his hand. Not only had he cataloged the core of the collection by himself, he seemed to have read each volume. Questions to him brought forth more information than I could possibly assimilate at the time. But that did not stop me from continuing to seek his help and advice.

As we moved into the 1990s, new responsibilities in the University kept me away from the library more than I would have wished, but I still managed to see T.H. on important occasions. Some of these occasions were happy, such as a memorable dinner party to celebrate his eightieth birthday; others were less so, such as the memorial services for Herrlee

Creel and then, shortly thereafter, for his wife, Lorraine Creel. Professor Creel had been instrumental in bringing T.H. to the University of Chicago shortly after the end of the Second World War; he thereafter served as his teacher, his colleague, and his good friend. It was also when I came to the University that I met Professor Creel for the first time. He too had been retired for a number of years and lived quite a distance from the university, visiting the library only infrequently. Nevertheless, because of our shared interests in the cultural history of ancient China, we made time on each of his visits for long chats. Unlike T.H., Professor Creel was no longer keeping up with new developments in the field; instead, he enjoyed reminiscing about his time in China in the 1930s and his early years at the University. I know that he regarded with great pride his role in establishing the University's East Asian library, and I know too that of all the persons he had been associated with during his sixty years at the University, his fondest feelings and greatest respect were for T. H. Tsien. At the memorial service for Professor Creel, who passed away in 1994, Professor Tsien spoke very movingly about their long relationship; it was clear that the respect these two great scholars felt for each other was completely reciprocal.

Although I was two generations junior to both Professors Tsien and Creel, I was able to benefit to some extent from their relationship, and at least in some small measure to reunite them. Towards the end of his life, Professor Creel donated to the University a number of artifacts that he had collected during his time in China in the 1930s, especially in the course of his visits to Anyang, where the Institute of History and Philology of Academia Sinica was conducting archaeological excavations. Included among these artifacts was a collection of about forty inscribed oracle bones, most of which had only been seen by a select group of students and friends. When these oracle bones arrived at the University's Smart Gallery of Art (now the Smart Museum of Art), I had the privilege, together with my own student and colleague Cai Fangpei, of presenting them to the scholarly world, first in a small catalog published by the Smart Gallery (*Ritual and Reverence: Chinese Art at the University of Chicago* [Chicago: Smart Gallery of Art, 1989]), and then shortly thereafter in a Chinese version in honor of Professor Tsien's eightieth birthday ("Zhijiage daxue suocang Shangdai jiagu" 芝加哥大學所藏商代甲骨 [Shang dynasty oracle

bones in the collection of the University of Chicago], in *Zhongguo tushu wenshi lunji* 中國圖書文史論集 [*Collected Essays on Chinese Bibliography, Literature and History*], ed. Ma Tai-loi 馬泰來 [Taipei: Zhengzhong shuju, 1991], 197–207; [Beijing: Xiandai chubanshe, 1992], 231–243). It is a continuing honor for me to be able to escort visitors to the Smart Museum and to examine these oracle bones with them. For Chinese visitors, I invariably give them a copy of the article published in the volume dedicated to T.H.

Sometime around 1995, Anthony Yu, Carl Darling Buck Professor in the Humanities and then my successor as chair of the Department of East Asian Languages and Civilizations, asked me if I might help Professor Tsien with a revised second edition of his book *Written on Bamboo and Silk*. Of course, I could not say no. Together with another student of mine, Peng Ke, we collated the revisions that Professor Tsien had introduced into the various Chinese-language editions of his book, translated them, and interpolated them at the appropriate points in the English-language text. At Professor Tsien's express request, I then set about writing an Afterword to the book that surveyed Western-language contributions to the study of early Chinese paleography over the forty years since his book had first been published. This second edition was finally published by the University of Chicago Press in 2004.

Even though Professor Tsien was already in his nineties, still he oversaw much of the copyediting, which was a formidable task indeed for such a complicated book. What is more, shortly after its publication, he arranged to have this new edition translated into Chinese and published in China. When I protested that my own Afterword, filled with citations of Western scholarship, was essentially untranslatable, he enlisted a former student of the University of Chicago, Chester Wang 王正義, to undertake the translation, and quickly had it published in both mainland China and also Taiwan ("1960 nian yilai Zhongguo guwenzixue de fazhan" 1960年以來中國古文字學的發展, *Wenxian* 文獻 2005:4–2006:1; *Zhongguo tushuguan xuehui huibao* 中國圖書館學會會報 Bulletin of the Library Association of China, 74, June 2005, 51–68).

This last feature brings me to the final point that I wish to make about Tsuen-Hsuei Tsien's remarkable career, and the focus of the present

volume of his essays. Beginning with his packing of the rare book collection of China's National Library in 1941 and shipping it to the United States for safekeeping during the war with Japan, Professor Tsien has strived ceaselessly to connect China and the West. It goes without saying that his efforts to develop the East Asian collection of the University of Chicago Library into one of the truly great research libraries in the world was undertaken in this spirit. So too was his training of an entire generation of Chinese librarians in the United States, now including the heads of the Harvard-Yenching Library and Princeton University's Gest Library, as well as senior members in the Library of Congress.

This concern for East-West exchange is also to be seen throughout his published scholarship, including much of that included in the present volume, beginning with his 1954 article, "Western Impact on China through Translation" (*Far Eastern Quarterly*, 14.3 [May 1954]), through his biographies of many of his colleagues and friends. I think it is also this concern that has driven him not only to translate his Chinese writings into English, but just as important, to translate his English writings into Chinese. As I noted previously, *Written on Bamboo and Silk* has been translated and published (and re-published) throughout the Chinese world (Hong Kong, 1975; Beijing, 1981; Taipei, 1987; Shanghai, 2002), as well as being translated into Japanese in 1980 and Korean in 1991. Likewise, his contribution to *Science and Civilisation in China* has also been translated into Chinese, Japanese, and Korean and is routinely cited in studies there of the history of printing in China. It is thus altogether fitting that he has been honored both in his adopted city of Chicago (being elected as a member of The Chicago Senior Citizen Hall of Fame in 1987, and in 1996 being awarded a Distinguished Alumni Award from the University of Chicago) and also by his alma mater Nanjing University, which in 2007 named its new library of the Advanced Institute of Humanities and Social Sciences for him.

In comparison to such truly prestigious awards, any praise from me for Tsuen-Hsuen Tsien would surely be superfluous. Let me just say that it has been an honor and privilege for me to know and work with T.H. for almost twenty-five years. I look forward to celebrating more birthdays with him, and to further scholarship and awards.