

Preface of the exhibition

Yeh Chun Chan and World War II
A Chinese Member of the Bloomsbury Group

Preface
by Alan Macfarlane

YEH Chun Chan (1914-99): the double bridge

YEH Chun Chan (Yeh Junjian) was a Chinese writer and translator. His life and work provides us with a fascinating example of cultural translation. He formed a double bridge, between the past and the present in China, and between China and the Western world.

Born in a remote village in 1914, shortly after the end of the Chinese Imperial System (1911), he was brought up in a period of hopefulness and outward-looking exploration, when all things seemed possible.

He started his education in 1920 and went to Wuhan University in 1933. Four years later the Sino-Japanese war broke out, and the country continued to be riven by the warlord rivalries which had started in the late 1920's and the growing confrontation between the Kuomintang government and the emerging Communists. His next years, including a trip to Japan where, at the end, he was imprisoned, were difficult. This was a period of destruction and confusion which he documents in his autobiographical novels, the trilogy 'Quiet are the mountains'.

Yeh came to England in 1944 to work for the British Wartime Propaganda Ministry, giving numerous speeches, and broadcasts on the B.B.C., to inform the British about the anti-Japanese efforts. At the end of the war he went to King's College, Cambridge, where he spent four years studying literature, meeting many leading figures in art, literature and translation, and writing his first autobiographical novel in English.

Yeh returned to China in 1949 when the Communist Party was victorious and for the next thirty years he translated many works from European languages, and suffered under the hardships of the Cultural Revolution. After 1978, China began to open again and he was able to travel and to write more freely. He lived through the period of the re-birth of hope and outward-looking curiosity, dying at the age of 85 in 1999.

Yeh was thus a temporal bridge between the hopeful China of the 1920's, through the dreadful years from the 1930's to the 1970's, and out into the new China after 1978.

He was a geographical bridge between China and the West in both directions. He brought news of China to the West during the Second World War, starting his co-operation with western scholars through his friendship with Julian Bell (the son of Clive and Vanessa, and the nephew of Virginia Woolf) at Wuhan University in 1936. Then, on his return, he took the West to China through his translations from twelve European languages.

Now China is once again opening and sending out its young people and elements of its culture all over the world, and wanting to import the best of world culture into China and to rediscover its largely destroyed cultural heritage in western archives and museums. Yeh is symbolically a relevant forerunner of what is happening on a global scale. He is a bridge from the world's most continuous ancient civilization, China, to

the West, and from the West to China. And a bridge across the great chasm (late 1920's to late 1970's) in twentieth century China.

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Some key dates for YEH Chun Chan

Born 7th December 1914; studied at Wuhan University, 1933; met Julian Bell, graduated and taught English in Japan, 1936; went to Hong Kong to translate China's anti-Japanese War literature and started the first English magazine "Chinese Writings", 1938; went to wartime capital Chongqing and became Professor of Chongqing, Central and Fudan Universities, 1940; married wife Yuan Yin, 1942; invited by British Wartime Propaganda Ministry, went to UK to make over 600 public speeches all over UK for the introduction of China's anti-Japanese War, 1944; got a fellowship from British Council to research Western Literature at King's College, Cambridge, 1945-1949; returned to China and attended Land Reform, 1949; started the magazine "Chinese Literature" in both English and French, translated from Danish into Chinese "Complete Works of Hans Andersen's Fairy Tales" and became most famous for this in China, published two trilogies, many full-length novels, short stories for both adults and children, 1953-1991; formally retired and published another 2 million characters works, 1991-1998; passed away at 85-year-old, 1999.

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Acknowledgement

The photographic exhibition runs from 20th July to the end of August 2014 in King's College antechapel. Entry is included in the admission ticket. This is the second exhibition about Chinese scholar and Kingsman in King's Chapel and university of Cambridge. The first one was about Chinese poet Xu Zhimo, hosted in the Chapel in 2014.

The exhibition is held with the kind permission and support of the Provost, Dean and Fellows of King's College, Cambridge. It is part of the events to celebrate the five hundredth anniversary of the completion of King's College Chapel in 1515.

The exhibition is held in association with the Cambridge Rivers Project (University of Cambridge), King's College Archive Centre, the Vanishing Worlds Foundation, Wuhan University (China) Archive Centre and Yeh Chun Chan's family.

It has been curated by WANG Zilan (Research Associate, Museum of Archeology and Anthropology), Alan Macfarlane (Fellow of King's) and Sarah Harrison.

Assistant curators are LI Shuo (MPhil student of King's), DAI Shiyuan, DUAN Yiran, YEH George. The principal advisor is YEH Neal, the son of YEH Chun Chan, and Sir Charles Chadwyck-Healey.

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Opening

Venue: Master's Lodge, King's College

Date: 21st July, 2015

Host of the opening ceremony

Vice-Chancellor of King's College, Dr Rob Wallach

Guests and speakers of the ceremony

Chinese Ambassador Liu Xiaoming

Vice-Chancellor of University of Cambridge, Prof Sir Leszek Borysiewicz

Mayor of Cambridge, Cllr Robert Dryden

Sir Charles Chadwyck-Healey, president of Cambridge Rivers Project and Vanishing World Foundation

Professor Alan Macfarlane, FBA, life fellow of King's College, Chairman of Cambridge Rivers Project

Patricia McGuire, Archivist, King's College

CEO of Cambridge International Examinations, Mr. Michael O'Sullivan

Director of Needham Research Institute, Prof. Mei Jianjun

Yeh Chun Chan's son and several other family members, Mr. Yeh Nianlun

Vice-Chancellor of Wuhan University, Prof. Luo Yuting

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Meeting result:

Ambassador Liu Xiaoming would like to be an honorary advisor of a research project "History of U.K-China Educational and Cultural Exchange 1910-1940s" hosted by Cambridge Rivers Project in association with King's Archive Centre, Needham Research Institute and Wuhan University (China).

Introduction of Cambridge Rivers Project

The Cambridge Rivers Project (CRP) was founded by King's Fellow Professor Alan Macfarlane and launched in 1983. It is named after one of the founders of modern fieldwork anthropology, W.H.R. Rivers. It is dedicated to innovation and communication in anthropology. In particular it is concerned with collecting and conserving information about disappearing worlds and in spreading a knowledge of different cultures through teaching and research.

It aims to make available material on a broad range of cultures in Asia and the West through the use of multi-media database and the internet. Between 1983 and 2009 the project was housed in the Department of Social Anthropology, University of Cambridge. It is now affiliated to MAA and associated with King's College at the University of Cambridge. More information about the project:
<http://maa.cam.ac.uk/cambridge-rivers-project/>