

JAO TSUNG-I (RAO ZONGYI) 饒宗頤
(1917–2018)

Chen Zhi and Adam Schwartz*

Professor Jao Tsung-I 饒宗頤 (*pinyin*: Rao Zongyi) passed away on Tuesday, February 6, 2018, at the age of 101 years.

Professor Jao, courtesy name Bolian 伯濂 (or Bozi 伯子), and pen names Xuantang 選堂 and Gu'an 固菴, was one of the most renowned and revered scholars of our time. He was born in Chaozhou 潮州, Guangdong in 1917. Over the course of more than eight decades of academic research, his scholarship extended to nearly every field of traditional Chinese culture and included ancient history (including the conception of legitimacy), historiography (e.g. local gazetteers of Chaozhou, oracle bone chronology and geography of the *Chu ci* 楚辭), paleography (e.g. oracle bone and bronze inscriptions, and bamboo and silk manuscripts), Dunhuang studies, Sino-foreign relations (Sino-Tibet and Sino-India), Chinese classics and their commentaries, archaeology, religions (including Daoism, Buddhism, Brahmanism and Zoroastrianism), ethnology, bibliographical studies, classical literature (*Shi jing* 詩經, *Chu ci*, Han Rhapsody, *shi* 詩 and *ci* 詞 poetry, prose, fiction and drama), and art history. He was proficient in multiple languages, ranging from English and French to ancient languages such as Latin, Sanskrit, and Pali. Professor Jao was also highly regarded for his original creation in poetry, calligraphy, and painting, and he was a master of the *guqin* 古琴, an ancient seven-string zither. Throughout his life, Professor Jao was devoted to promoting Chinese culture, and his profound and bright virtue cultivated and enlightened numerous others.

Primarily teaching in Hong Kong, Macau, and Singapore, Professor Jao held visiting professorships at Yale University in the United States, L'École Française d'Extrême-Orient in France, and Kyoto University in Japan, as well as a research professorship at Academia Sinica in Taiwan. His towering academic achievements have earned him a worldwide audience and everlasting reverence.

Over the years, he has a host of honors in recognition of his exemplary accomplishments. He was awarded the highly regarded Prix Stanislas Julien by the Collège de France and was made an Academician of both the École française d'Extrême-Orient (Institute of Far Eastern Studies) and the International Eurasian Academy of Sciences, Russia. He was

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also Associate Foreign Member of the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, Institut de France. In 2000, Professor Jao was awarded the Grand Bauhinia Medal, the highest honor offered by the government of Hong Kong SAR. In 2009, he was appointed as the only Hong Kong academician of the Central Research Institute of Culture and History. He received Honorary Doctorates from the following institutions: University of Hong Kong (1982), École pratique des hautes études (1993), Lingnan University (1995), Open University of Hong Kong (1999), Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (2003), Chinese University of Hong Kong (2003), University of Macau (2004), Soka University (2006), Tasmania University (2011), Hong Kong Baptist University (2012), Shu Yen University (2012), and Shangdong University (2014); and he was made University Laureate, the highest Academic Honor of Chinese University of Hong Kong (2014).¹

Jao began his career in academia while still in his teens. In the 1930s, he worked with his father, Jao E 饒鏐, to compile the *Bibliographical Treatise of Eminent Scholars of Chaozhou*, part of *Chaozhou zhi* 潮州志, the local gazetteer of Chaozhou, with biographical accounts of notable people from his hometown. The book was published in 1934 when Jao Tsung-i was just seventeen years old. In 1935, Jao was appointed by Sun Yat Sen University as the compiler of *Guangdong Tongzhi* 廣東通志 (General gazetteer of Guangdong), and a fellow of the Research Institute of the University. In the 1940s, Jao worked on the new edition of the *Chaozhou zhi* as the Editor in Chief, and this was published in 1949. He wisely invited local experts and scientists to write relevant portions for certain subjects. The most innovative part of this gazetteer is the inclusion of a wide body of new knowledge, like hydro-geographical features, temperature changes, industry, and natural resources, into a traditional genre of historiography.²

It is an enterprise to even attempt to summarize the entire body of his massive overall achievement, and so the following just provides an overview of his contributions, particularly as it concerns the study of Early China, based on what is collected in the twenty-volume set of fourteen *juan*, titled *Rao Zongyi ershi shiji xueshu wenji* 饒宗頤二十世紀學術文集.³

1. Zheng Weiming 鄭煒明 and Hu Xiaozhong 胡孝忠, "Rao Zongyi jiaoshou xueshu jianli" 饒宗頤教授學術簡歷, in *Rao Zongyi jiaoshou zhuzuo mulu sanbian* 饒宗頤教授著作目錄三編, ed. Zheng Weiming and Hu Xiaozhong (Jinan: Qilu shushe, 2014), 5–8.

2. Lu Shanong 盧山紅, "Raoben *Chaozhou zhi* de bianzhan fangfa, zhiqiu he chengjiu" 饒本潮州志的編撰方法旨趣和成就, in *Lun Rao Zongyi* 論饒宗頤, ed. Zheng Weiming (Hong Kong: Joint Publishing, 1995), 147–56.

3. These twenty volumes were first published by Xinwenfeng Publishing House of Taipei in 2003 and were reprinted by Renmin University Press in 2009.

The first *juan* is titled “Shisu” 史溯 (Origins of History) and comprises thirty-five important articles on early Chinese myth and origins. The subjects of these papers include a discussion of the posthumous names of the Shang kings, Heavenly stems, the bird cult, early symbols and writings, patterns on Neolithic jade and pottery objects, and ethnic groups surrounding Central Plains, such as *Hu* and their connection with Hurians, as well as comparative studies of early China with neighboring civilizations, such as the origin myths of early China with the creation epics of the Near East, music correlations between the astronomical knowledge of the ancient Chinese and the Babylonians, early writing and engraved symbols in ancient India and China, and Shamanism in ancient China and other cultures.

Two important books on the study of oracle bone inscriptions form *juan* 2–4. These are *Yidai zhenbu renwu tongkao* 殷代貞卜人物通考 (A compendium of diviners of the Shang dynasty) and *Jiagu jilin* 甲骨集林 (Collected papers on oracle bone inscriptions). The former, first published in Hong Kong in 1959, is a massive work of more than 1000 pages. It collects and studies 142 names of Shang oracle bone diviners and provides a typology of the subjects about which they made divinations. The work cites thousands of oracle bone inscriptions, and Jao’s philological comments usually follow. Jao starts the book with a very useful introduction to divination as a practice; he made several discoveries, perhaps the most important of which was that oracle bone “charges” were not questions but declarative statements. This is the reason that when he cites oracle bone inscriptions he parses the charge with a period and not with a question mark. Other important points in this work are Jao’s hypotheses that Shang divination used bones and milfoil together in combination, and that diviners and scribes were two different groups of professionals, and his revisions to the dating of certain sets of oracle bone inscriptions. *Jiagu jilin* 甲骨集林 consists of thirty-five articles, and includes forewords and essays that range from general issues on geography, astronomy, official titles, ethnicities, religion, and sacrifices, to more specific issues such as an interpretation of a single word, the names of Shang kings, and rites of exorcism.

In addition to these two works, Jao also compiled a number of collections of oracle bone inscriptions held abroad: *Bali suojian jiagulu* 巴黎所見甲骨錄 (Record of Oracle bones seen in Paris), *Riben suojian jiagulu* 日本所見甲骨錄 (Record of Oracle bones seen in Japan), *Haiwai jiagu luyi* 海外甲骨錄遺 (Uncollected oracle bones from Overseas), and *Ou-Mei-Ya suojian jiagu lucun* 歐美亞所見甲骨錄存 (Record of Oracle bones seen in Europe, America and Asia), among others. His superior contribution to the field of Shang oracle bone studies has led to him being recognized as the “Fifth Hall,” *Xuantang* 選堂, the other four being *Xuetang* 雪堂

(Luo Zhenyu 羅振玉, 1866–1940), Guantang 觀堂 (Wang Guowei 王國維, 1877–1927), Yantang 彥堂 (Dong Zuobin 董作賓, 1895–1963), and Dingtang 鼎堂 (Guo Moruo 郭沫若, 1892–1978).

Between the years 1983 and 1999, Prof. Jao, with the assistance of Prof. Shen Jianhua (now at Qinghua University), compiled the five-volume reference work *Jiaguwen tongjian* 甲骨文通檢 (General Index to the oracle bone inscriptions). Volume 3 includes an anthology of thirty papers on bamboo and silk manuscripts titled *Jianbo wensou* 簡帛文獻. Most of the scholarship focuses on Warring States–Han discoveries from Guodian 郭店, Jiudian 九店, Yunmeng 雲夢, Jianshui Jinguang 肩水金關 of Zhangye 張掖, and Fangmatan 放馬灘 of Tianshui 天水, Yinqueshan 銀雀山, and Mawangdui 馬王堆. The remaining part of this volume is comprised of four books: *Changsha Chuboshu yanjiu* 長沙楚帛書研究 (A study of the Chu silk manuscript of Changsha), *Shuihudi Qinjian rishu yanjiu* 睡虎地秦簡日書研究 (A study of the *day books* of the Qin bamboo manuscripts),⁴ *Dunhuang Hanjian biannian kaozheng* 敦煌漢簡編年考證 (A chronological study of the Han bamboo strips discovered from Dunhuang), and *Xin Mang jian jizheng* 新莽簡輯證 (A collated study of the bamboo strips of the Xin dynasty). These last two books were co-authored with Li Junming 李均明.

Volume 4 of *Rao Zongyi ershi shiji xueshu wenji* collects three books on classical studies, and includes the inscriptions cast on the bronze chime bells found in the tomb of Marquis Yi of Zeng, which contain the names of musical tones and pitches. Jao and Zeng Xiantong examined the inscriptions in detail and formed a hypothesis that the names of these tones and pitches used in the state of Zeng might have been from a tradition that was different from the state of Chu.

Volume 5 has five lengthy articles that explore the origins of Buddhism and Taoism, and includes a study of the Xiang'er 想爾 commentary and recension of the *Laozi* preserved in the British Museum, as well as a study of the siddhām in Sanskrit manuscripts. The Xiang'er commentary and recension of the *Laozi* was discovered amongst the manuscripts brought by Sir Aurel Stein from the Grottoes of the Thousand Buddhas at Dunhuang to the British Museum of London. Jao's book on this topic, first published in 1956, contains a lengthy preface that discusses the authorship of the text and its connection to the Celestial Master Taoism. Jao proved convincingly that this version of *Laozi* was modified or distorted from the Heshanggong commentary in order to accord to

4. For Jao's contribution to the study of the Qin bamboo strips unearthed at Yunmeng of Hubei, in collaboration with Zeng Xiantong 曾憲通, see Donald Harper, "A Chinese Demonography of the Third Century B.C.," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 45.2 (1985), 459–98, and Cho-yun Hsu's review of this book in the *Journal of Asian Studies* 44.2 (1985), 374–75.

the doctrines of its user community.⁵ His book and study drew positive scholarly attention and led to a heated discussion about the early history of “Tianshi Dao” 天師道 (Celestial Master School) and the textual history of *Daode jing* 道德經.⁶

Volume 6 collects Jao’s four book-length articles on historical studies. These are “Guoshi shang zhi Zhengtonglun” 國史上之正統論 (Discourse on legitimacy in Chinese history), “Shixue luncong” 史學論叢 (Papers on historical studies), “Nanfang minzuxue luncong” 南方民族學論叢 (Papers on ethnical studies of Southern China), “Jiulong yu Songji shiliao” 九龍與宋季史料 (Kowloon and historical materials of the Late Song). “Guoshi shang de Zhengtonglun” was published as a book in 1977 with the title “Zhongguo shixue shang zhi zhengtonglun” 中國史學上之正統論. According to Jao, the idea for this research was initiated when he was invited by Yale to teach a course on Pre-Qin literature in the early 1970s. During his stay there, Arthur Wright organized a series of seminars, and there were discussions about the ideas of legitimacy in the tradition of different countries. With five years of devoted effort, Jao finished this work and wrote a lengthy foreword of more than 60,000 words that traced the roots of the concept of *zhengtong* throughout the imperial period of Chinese history.⁷

Volume 7 consists of three books: *Zhongwai guanxishi lunji* 中外關係史論集 (Papers on Sino-foreign relations), *Xinjiapo gushiji* 新加坡古事記 (The ancient historical records of Singapore), and *Xing-Ma huawen beike xinian* 新馬華文碑刻繫年 (A chronicle of Epigraphs of Singapore and Malaysia). The first collection consists of twenty papers. Based mainly on the research of ancient Chinese documents, neglected Taoist scriptures, newly discovered material objects, and source materials from other languages like Sanskrit, Persian, and Burmese, Jao focuses primarily on geographical names of Indochina, Sino-Euro and Sino-Indochina interaction and relations, epigraphs in Chinese discovered in Sumatra and Bru-

5. William Hung, “A Bibliographical Controversy at the T’ang Court A.D. 719,” *HJAS* 20.1/2 (1957), 121.

6. For the importance of the “Xiang’er” commentary of *Laozi*, see William G. Boltz, “The Religious and Philosophical Significance of the ‘Hsiang erh’ *Lao tzu* in the Light of the Ma wang tui Silk Manuscripts,” *Bulletin of SOAS*, 45.1 (1982), 95–117, and “Notes on the Authenticity of the So Tan 索統 Manuscript of the Lao-Tzu 老子,” *Bulletin of SOAS*, 59.3 (1996), 508–15. Jao himself published an article dealing specifically with the So Tan 索統 manuscript, “So Tan hsieh-pen Tao te ching ts’an-chiuan” 索統寫本道德經殘卷 (Fragmentary Edition of the *Daodejing* copied by Suo Dan), *Journal of Oriental Studies* 2.1 (1955), 1–71.

7. For brief introduction of the concept of *zhengtong* 正統 (legitimacy) in English, refer to Hok-Lam Chan, “‘Ta Chin’ (Great Golden): The Origin and Changing Interpretations of the Jurchen State Name,” *T’oung Pao* 77.4/5 (1991), 266–68.

nei, and historical accounts in Chinese of ancient India, Burma, Vietnam, Bengal, Nepal, and Bhutan. For example, in his celebrated article, “Shu bu yu Cīnapaṭṭa: lun zaoqi zhong-Yin-Mian zhi jiaotong” 蜀布與 Cīnapaṭṭa—論早期中印緬之交通,⁸ Jao produced ample evidence from various sources to convince readers that the word “cina” in Sanskrit derived from a phonetic representation of the state name “Qin” centuries before this state unified the Sinitic world in 221 B.C. and established the dynasty. His conclusion overturned the widely accepted notion that “cina” and “sina” came from the dynastic name “Qin” starting with the Qin dynasty.⁹

Volume 8 is a collection of Jao’s works on Dunhuang studies, and perhaps most importantly includes his book on musical transcripts, *Dunhuang qu* 敦煌曲 (The Music of Dunhuang). This was translated into French by Paul Demiéville (1894–1979) and published in 1971.¹⁰ It also includes his paper on sketches and draft drawings found at Dunhuang, which was published in the *Bulletin de l’Ecole française d’Extrême-Orient* (1978),¹¹ as well as more than twenty other research papers and essays written while he was in Europe on Dunhuang manuscripts and relics, especially those held in Paris.

Volume 11 collects Jao’s valuable studies on the *Chu ci* and *Wenxuan*. And other volumes collect research on the history of Chaozhou (Volume 9), classical poetry and poetics (Volume 12), and works on art history (Volume 13). Volume 14 contains his creative works, primarily poems and prose in classical style.

The limited length of this obituary requires us to stop here. We should note that Professor Jao has made a significant contribution to other fields

8. Jao Tsung-i 饒宗頤, “Shu bu yu Cīnapaṭṭa: lun zaoqi zhong-Yin-Mian zhi jiaotong” 蜀布與 Cīnapaṭṭa —論早期中印緬之交通, originally published in *Fanxue ji* 梵學集 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 1993), 223–60, and appearing on pp. 255–89 of Volume 7 of *Rao Zongyi ershi shiji xueshu wenji*.

9. According to Jao, Manomahan Ghosh, an Indian scholar, presented a paper, “Origin and Antiquity of the Sanskrit Word *Cina* as the Name of China,” during Jao’s visit to Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute of Poona in 1963, and hypothesized the name “*Cina*” for China occurred no later than 625 B.C. Jao supported this theory with abundant evidence and secondary sources from various languages, including archaic Chinese, Sanskrit, Greek, Persian, Japanese, and Burmese.

10. Donald Holzman, review of *Airs de Touen-houang (Touen-houang k’iu 敦煌曲): Textes à chanter des VIIIe–Xe siècles* by Jao Tsung-i and Paul Demiéville, *T’oung Pao* 61.1/3 (1975), 169–76.

11. “The sketches were first published by Jao Tsung-i *Dunhuang baihua*, adapted into French by Pierre Rychkmans, *Peintures Mono-chromes de Dunhuang*, Publications de l’École Française d’extrême-Orient, Mémoires Archeologiques XIII (Paris: École Française d’extrême-Orient, Mémoires Archéologiques XIII (Paris: École Française d’extrême-Orient, 1978), fascicules 1–3.” See Sarah E. Fraser, “Formulas of Creativity: Artist’s Sketches and Techniques of Copying at Dunhuang,” *Artibus Asiae* 59.3/4 (2000): 189, n. 1.

of learning as well, including *ci* poetry, literary theory (*Wenxin diaolong* 文心雕龍), Buddhism, paleography, and many others. His evidential method, using received and excavated sources in addition to material culture (*sanchong zhengjufa* 三重證據法), is a cornerstone of his craft and can be witnessed throughout scholarship.

The University of Hong Kong established the Jao Tsung-I Petite Ecole in 2003 to honor the great achievements and the international accolades of Professor Jao. Since then, nearly twenty institutes in Hong Kong, Macau, and Mainland China have followed the example of naming organizations after him. Hong Kong Baptist University inaugurated the Jao Tsung-I Academy of Sinology (BUJAS) on January 21, 2013. With its commitment to promote traditional Chinese classical studies and to advance interdisciplinary research and innovation in the field of Sinology, BUJAS started the bilingual and peer-reviewed academic journal *Bulletin of the Jao Tsung-I Academy of Sinology*.

The *Bulletin of the Jao Tsung-I Academy of Sinology* is published annually to provide an academic platform for scholars worldwide to share their recent and original research in classical Chinese studies and Sinology. The Bulletin invited twenty-two internationally renowned scholars to be academic consultants and twenty-one well-known academics to form an editorial board. In 2017, the Academy also initiated an English book series, the *JAS Library of Sinology* (De Gruyter Mouton), edited by Chen Zhi (HKBU), Dirk Meyer (Oxford), and Adam Schwartz (HKBU). Forthcoming volumes include the unpublished papers of David Nivison, a book on the question of authorship in Early China by Zhang Hanmo, oracle bone research by Adam Schwartz, and a new book by Edward Shaughnessy on the contributions of Western Sinologists to the study of inscriptions and manuscripts. We think these would have pleased Prof. Jao.

To conclude this obituary, we would like to quote a passage from Jesse Wang and Travis Chan, two colleagues of ours at BUJAS:

Prof. Jao Tsung-i is known for his dual pursuit and “amalgamation of scholarship and art,” and Dunhuang has proven to be the confluence point of his academic research and artistic creation. Prof. Jao expressed his longing for Dunhuang in multiple occasions. For example, he wrote in a quatrain entitled “Inscribed on the Wall at Mogao Grotto” (collected in the *Baojun ji*): “Stone grottoes in the spring breeze, green of the wild olive/ In my next life I would rather be a scribe and copy sutras.” (Translated by Nicholas M. Williams, *The Residue of Dreams: Selected Poems of Jao Tsung-I*, Ithaca, NY: East Asia Program, Cornell University, 2016, 73.)

While the next world remains unknown, Professor Jao has certainly attained immortality as a scribe and scholar in this one.