
Challenges and Perspectives of Chinese Studies in a Changing Society

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Summary

One may approach and discuss current trends, challenges and perspectives of Chinese Studies or Sinology in Europe from a number of different angles. This essay attempts to adumbrate a number of general trends that may be observed to have characterised the recent development, and to outline some of the aspects of the changed climate that introduced significant challenges to which European Sinology and Sinologists need to respond. The changes of policies with which institutions throughout Europe have to contend set the scenario in which Sinology feels the cold wind of economy, managerialism and utilitarianism.

Key words: Sinology, Chinese Studies, Higher Education, University Reforms, Institutional Reforms, Academic Curricula

Introduction

Although one might have wished otherwise, the shifting politics of higher education have altered the field that is so dear to our hearts. The archetypal absent-minded professor or the eccentricity associated with some of the great figures in the history of Sinology and enshrined in world literature by Elias Canetti may perhaps be regarded as golden reminiscences by all those who regret the transformation that took place during the last decades.

Since the roots of the present lie in the past, we may take the fairly recent hybrid term “Sinology” as well as its gradual emancipation out of Oriental Studies as gentle reminders of its development and its comparatively late institutionalisation in academia.

Despite a number of attempts to define the scope of Sinology, the terms Sinology and Chinese Studies are frequently used promiscuously for there seems to be no agreed, sharp distinction between these two terms.¹ What comes under the title of “Sinology” in one context may well be named “Chinese Studies” in another. I shall not take this article as a further opportunity to sink my teeth into this issue but use the term Sinology primarily in its broader sense. It may therefore suffice to state that it denotes the study and research on any aspect of Chinese culture which is based on a solid knowledge of Chinese languages. Recent developments have shown that the way in which a balance between the linguistic requirements and the methodological approaches and / or current research trends in relevant disciplines is negotiated, depends first and foremost on the individual and the academic topic and agenda. In a number of contexts (institutional or otherwise) Sinology in the more narrow sense – with the primarily philologically based and text focused approach at its theoretical core complemented by particular thematic and theoretical interests – tends to be juxtaposed with

¹ In view of the terminology used for our sister disciplines in cultural studies, i.e. French (not: France) Studies, Russian (not: Russia) Studies and so forth, the term “China Studies” which became fashionable more recently in some circles seems a somewhat odd and fairly clumsy translation of the term *Zhongguoxue* 中國學.

Chinese Studies, the latter being often used to indicate that the focus of the study of China extended towards the social sciences and disciplines.

Although the tensions between the language based and the discipline based “camps” can probably be traced back to the beginnings of Sinology as an academically institutionalised “discipline,” the discussions that took place during the 1960s brought about a definitive shift in the study of China and created a fundamentally new environment.² The following decades witnessed rapid changes in the academic framework in which the study of China was and still is conducted: the concept of area studies became fashionable. Due to the combination of regional expertise with methods – that seemed at the time – solidly based within the social sciences, and with interdisciplinary challenges as an additional impetus, the study of China was expected to cater for and contribute to a range of issues that were made topical in interdisciplinary and cross-regional contexts. In the changed intellectual climate, the study of the languages, cultures, philosophies and literatures of China within the traditional framework became widely perceived as far less attractive. In addition to the intellectual challenges, the last decades also witnessed major political, social, and economic changes. After the period of generous policies of university funding which has witnessed the setting up of an impressive number of institutes of Chinese Studies or Sinology throughout Europe (even in smaller and minor universities) had finally come to an end during the late 1980s and 1990s, the more recent years are characterised by steadily declining government contributions to university funding. As a consequence, the complex financial situation in which universities find themselves prompted the need for substantial institutional and major infrastructural reforms.

The Regional Focus: The Perspective of *Zhuangzi's* Frog?

It has to be said that the history of Sinology in Europe is well documented in articles and monographs, some of which describe its development at certain universities, in specific areas or countries up to the present day.³ Booklets on the current situation of Chinese studies in various countries have been compiled by the European Association of Chinese Studies (EACS; <http://www>.

² See the famous discussion in *JAS*23.4 (1964) and following issues.

³ On some of the regional developments in Europe see the relevant articles in Ming Wilson & John Cayley (eds.): *Europe studies China. Papers from an international conference on the history of European sinology* (London: Han-Shan Tang, 1995) a collection of articles on various national developments and on the development on a number of fields of Sinology. For the development in France see Paul Demiéville: “Aperçu historique des études sinologiques en France”, in: *Acta Asiatica* 11 (1966), pp. 56-110 [also published in Paul Demiéville: *Choix d'études sinologiques, 1921-1970* (Leiden: Brill, 1973), pp. 433-487]; Michel Soyumié: “Les études chinoises”, in: *JA* 261 (1973), pp. 209-246. For The Netherlands see J.J.L. Duyvendak: “Early Chinese studies in Holland”, in: *TP*32 (1936), pp. 293-344; J.J.L. Duyvendak: *Holland's contribution to Chinese studies* (London: The China Society, 1950); A.F.P. Hulswé: “Chinese and Japanese studies in Holland”, in: *Chinese Culture* 10.3 (1969), pp. 67-75. For the United Kingdom see Timothy Hugh Barrett: *Singular listlessness. A short history of Chinese books and British scholars* (London: Wellsweep, 1989). The development in the German speaking countries is outlined in Herbert Franke: *Sinologie an deutschen Universitäten. Mit einem Anhang über die Mandschustudien* (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1968) [also available as *Sinology at German universities. With a supplement on Manchu studies* (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1968)]; Helmut Martin & Marion Eckhardt (eds.): *Clavis Sinica. Zur Geschichte der Chinawissenschaften. Ausgewählte Quellentexte aus dem deutschsprachigen Raum. Generelle Darstellungen, Institutionengeschichte, Wissenschaftler: Biographien und Bibliographien.* (Bochum: Ruhr University Bochum, 1997); Martin Kern: “The emigration of German sinologists 1933-1945: Notes on the history and historiography of Chinese studies”, in: *JAOS*118.4 (1998), pp. 507-529; Helmut Martin & Christiane Hammer (eds.): *Chinawissenschaften. Deutschsprachige Entwicklungen. Geschichte, Personen, Perspektiven* (Hamburg: Institut für Asienkunde, 1999); Bernhard Führer: *Vergessen und verloren. Die Geschichte der österreichischen*

soas.ac.uk/eacs)⁴, the International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS; <http://www.iias.leidenuniv.nl>) in Leiden published a very useful *Guide to Asian Studies in Europe* (Richmond: Curzon, 1998), and a number of European countries established their national association for Chinese Studies such as the *British Association for Chinese Studies* (BACS; <http://www.bacsuk.org>), *Association Française d'Etudes Chinoises* (AFEC; <http://assoc.wanadoo.fr/afec>), *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Chinastudien* (DVCS; http://www.ruhr-uni-bochum/slc/slc_dvcs.htm), and the *Association of Asian Studies in the Nordic Countries* (<http://www.abo.fi/norden/welcome.htm>).

The last decade or so has also witnessed an increasing interest of scholars in China and Taiwan not only in the history of Sinology but also in recent trends and developments in Western Sinology.⁵ Journals such as *Guoji Hanxue* 國際漢學 (*International Sinology*), *Shijie Hanxue* 世界漢學 (*World Sinology*), as well as articles in the newsletter *Hanxue yanjiu tongxun* 漢學研究通訊 (*Newsletter for research in Chinese studies*) published by the Hanxue Yanjiu Zhongxin 漢學研究中心 (Center for Chinese Studies) at the Guojia Tushuguan 國家圖書館 (National Library), formerly known as Zhongyang Tushuguan 中央圖書館 (Central Library), in Taipei cater for this fairly recent demand. In addition to that, the Zhongguo Shehui Kexueyuan 中國社會科學院 (Chinese Academy of Social Sciences) in Beijing published the *Waiguo yanjiu Zhongguo congshu* 外國研究中國叢書 (later: *Guowai yanjiu Zhongguo congshu* 國外研究中國叢書), a series of translations of studies conducted and published abroad.⁶ A number of Chinese universities have set up chairs and centres for research on foreign Chinese Studies and Sinology, most of which focus on aspects of the history of the field.

If we try to step back and take a look at the way in which current developments are customarily discussed, we find that a good deal of these narratives is ultimately based on historical achievements; current trends are thus often presented in the light of the history of Sinology in a specific area or country. Further to that we observe a strong emphasis on the pivots who defined academic topics and agenda for a certain period, and a tendency towards constructing lines of academic development. Impressive as these suggested lines of scholarly derivation may be in some cases, we need to remind ourselves that they are simply descriptive devices which contribute to the notion and the image of a specific regional development. Such narratives which are typically presented by someone who has a strong link with that regional development, may even go further

Chinastudien (Bochum: projekt verlag, 2001 [edition cathay, 42]).

⁴ See the booklets *Chinese studies in France*, published as *EACS Newsletter 2* (1988); *Chinese studies in Germany*, published as *EACS Newsletter 3* (1990); *Chinese studies in the Nordic Countries* (EACS, 1994 [Survey, 3]); *Russian Sinology* (Moscow: EACS, 1996 [Survey, 4]); *Czech, Hungarian, Slovakian, Slovenian Sinology* (EACS, 1996 [Survey, 5]); *Dutch, Belgian, Swiss and Austrian Sinology* (EACS [Survey, 6] forthcoming); *Chinese Studies in the U.K.* (EACS, 1998 [Survey, 7]).

⁵ A number of more or less successful descriptions of Sinology in European countries have been published during the last decades, see e.g. Zhang Shouping: *Xide de Hanxue ji qita* (Taipei: Guangwen shuju, 1970); Zhang Guogang: *Deguo de Hanxue yanjiu* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1994). Further to that a number of monographs on the history of Sinology (including recent developments) have been published in China, see e.g. Jean-Pierre Drège [Dai Ren] (translated by Geng Sheng: *Faguo dangdai Zhongguoxue. Cinquante ans d'études chinoises en France* (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 1998).

⁶ Concerning the reception of European Sinological scholarship in the PRC, we may point out that the publication of a booklet entitled *Ouzhou Zhongguoxue shouce* 歐洲中國學手冊 is announced since some years; its style is supposed to follow the example of the earlier *Meiguo Zhongguoxue shouce* 美國中國學手冊 (Peking: Zhongguo shehui kexue, 1981 [*Zhong-Wai yanjiu Zhongguo congshu*]). For a bibliographic overview see Thomas Kampen: "Foreign books on China in China. Chinese translations and reference works on international Sinology published in the People's Republic of China", in: *Révue Bibliographique de Sinologie* [NS] 15 (1997), pp. 65-75.

and suggest the existence of a specific “school” at their centres of Sinological research. Overlooking the fact that a hypothesis does not turn into a theory merely on the grounds of its assumptions being accepted as the sole conceptual framework by a group of individuals, the narrative would most certainly continue with a description of how this “school” influenced not only the regional development but how the output of its representatives transformed given standards and advanced scholarship. It is, of course, possible to perceive this description of such a stereotypical narrative as a cynical caricature. But it remains a fact that a good deal of descriptions of regional developments of Sinology is characterised by exaggerated complacency and a lack of critical distance; they may thus well be regarded as epitomes of misguided regionalism and nationalism.

In their narratives on regional developments of Sinology, barely a handful of authors kept a reserved attitude and took a distanced and, in even fewer cases, a critical angle to evaluate achievements and failures in the light of a wider context. Such a broader context in which the description and / or evaluation takes place, may be defined as research in Sinology and Chinese Studies in other countries. That is to say, one regional development is described in the context of international research trends. In addition, the network of citations and references found in publications may well offer distinct clues as to the scholarly networks and affiliations and the intellectual foundations on which certain trends rest. Since the development of Sinology is part of the discourse that takes place in the humanities and the studies of languages, literatures and cultures, the framework in which regional developments are discussed may thus even be widened to the field of intellectual history. An evaluation of the history or the present situation of Sinology thus needs to address a number of issues which touch upon the critical points of current scholarship: where does Sinological research stand in ongoing scholarly debates? In which respect can or does the state-of-the-art of Sinological research on specific research subjects contribute to the search for answers to current research interests? Are there any contributions that Sinological research made towards the development of research methodologies? Which role does Sinology play in the wider academic concerto?

It is obvious that these questions led and still lead to much heart-searching. In view of the various fields of Sinology, the answers may well differ. It is thus not surprising that I can hardly offer anything like a solution to these shared problems and questions. But it may be worth mentioning that any answer will necessarily reflect the position that different scholars assign to the research achievements in view of their own topics and subjects, and to the degree to which the necessity of an advanced methodological and theoretical awareness is perceived.

In this essay, I shall focus on some general trends that may be observed to have characterised and shaped the current conditions. Confronted with the apparently uncaring and thoughtless implications of the recent circumstances, Sinology and Sinologists need to respond to the changed environment in which teaching and research take place.

The Shift Towards a More Reflective Reception of the Subject

As far as the development of Sinology up to the first half of the twentieth century is concerned, the focus on individuals rather than on regional developments proves relatively useful. A number of scholars established themselves as intellectual pivots and thus defined main subjects and set research agenda. Up to the first half of the last century, the Sinological scholarly community in

Europe was still relatively small. It is therefore crucial to recognise the extraordinarily important position of individuals as intellectual driving force. With the main academic journals firmly in the hands of a few powerful scholars, affiliations, feuds and personal vendettas or conflicting conceptual frameworks were to have significant effects on academic careers. But on the other hand, it has also to be mentioned that, apart from a fairly limited number of exceptions, the Sinological discourse remained an international discourse even during the darkest periods of the twentieth century. To no small extent, this was related to the incalculable intellectual drain that continental Europe had suffered during the 1930s and 1940s. It may also be true that not every intellectual of European upbringing who found a job in US academia was necessarily a first rate scholar, but the enormous lack of Sinologists (obviously the same applies for other fields of studies) after the Second World War was indicative of the state of intellectual dilapidation that characterised the post-war scenario on the continent. Whereas a number of European scholars established themselves as leading figures in American and British academia, Sinology on the continent struggled to maintain momentum, and found itself increasingly unable to keep pace with the rapid development in the US. It is thus probably fair to state that it took a whole generation of post-war academic teachers and students to build up a modern, professional Sinology in Europe.

With the intellectual challenges of the 1960s and 1970s came a period during which Sinology or Chinese Studies (which has become the more fashionable term by then) flourished in terms of its institutional representation: a considerable number of universities established institutes of Sinology or Chinese Studies, and student numbers started to show a steady increase. Traditional Sinology was ill prepared for responding to the challenge of the new emphasis on research methods and theory for these two aspects were virtually absent in the given curricula. Nevertheless, the time was definitely ripe for this definitive shift towards more cultural topics and towards a greater concern with theory. Looking back at the production of publications by US based scholars of that period that were based on information gained from primary source material but interpreted with the tools and skills developed in the disciplines, one can gain a fairly realistic sense of how potentially fruitful this expansion in terms of methods, theories, and subjects was. The new trend was set by the US academic discourse; Europe was to follow their lead.

One of the down-sides of the new development was, of course, the emergence of a new species of scholars, i.e. those individuals who – due to a distinct lack of linguistic competence – can hardly be considered specialists in the Chinese field, and whom – due to a rather limited knowledge in theory and methods – the professional colleagues in the disciplines would hardly consider a true and thorough-bred specialist in their discipline. At the heart of this dilemma lay a number of problems which stemmed from the fact that even when the second generation of these individuals was trained, only a limited number of European institutions offered degree courses which included adequate training in both fields of studies. Following the adjustments of academic curricula during the last two decades or so, students who wish to learn Chinese and train in a discipline can now choose from a variety of institutions throughout Europe.

In view of the research community, it must however be pointed out that in some countries the tensions between disciplinary and regional, mainly language-based expertise do still overshadow the national Sinological climate. It is thus extremely lamentable that instead of identifying the overlap that can easily be found where the humanities march with the social sciences, the open, creative and

constructive interplay that leads to mutual intellectual enrichment has – be it for academic or personal reasons – given way to rivalry between factions and open or covert academic intolerance.

It goes without saying that the advent of the new research paradigms also transformed the remit of what now became called “traditional Sinology”. Sinology was now expected to work on a much broader range of cultural phenomena, to contribute to the wider discourse with a clear awareness of theoretical issues, critical theory, and contemporary criticism. Let me take the study of Chinese literature as an example: Whereas it became widely accepted that a strong sense of the importance of the theoretical mainstream and solid generic competence are indispensable for any work on modern or contemporary Chinese literature, the prominent role of these issues seems to be less articulated in the study of traditional Chinese literature. It certainly deserves particular consideration that the reader of traditional Chinese literature may need to deal with a wealth of lexical, hermeneutic and textual issues. However, the days when these issues served as a pretext for a certain lack of reflective reception of the subject and of serious attention to issues raised by critical theory do definitely belong to the past. On the other hand, we need to admit that the study of pre-modern China has hardly reached the level of sophistication which enables us to offer solid and substantial contributions to the wider discussion of and reflection on a number of cultural phenomena. As long as Sinology still suffers from a distinct lack of research into basic traditional concepts on the advanced analytical level of the disciplines, there remains a considerable amount of groundwork that needs to be dealt with. It is nevertheless also true that like in the past, the academic tribe of “Sinological hunters and gatherers” will still play an important role for this approach prepares the ground for theory focused research which rests firmly on both, the primary source material and the conceptual framework. Contrary to the study of modern China where the adaptation to the new challenges opened up a plethora of new vistas, students of pre-modern China seem to show a higher degree of reluctance to meet the new academic demand and to realise its objective. Whereas it is encouraging to see that the number of critically aware scholars does also increase in pre-modern studies, the number of those who work with (untranslated) primary sources is in decline.

The End of Regional Developments

Looking at the current situation of Sinology in geographical terms, it seems a rather pointless task to identify specific schools of learning in either a country or at a specific university. Any attempt to treat a national or regional development as a whole and therewith to reduce the current situation of Sinology in France, the UK, Germany, Italy and so forth to a few key research subjects and areas is bound to miss the point for it would need to be a deliberate simplification of fairly diversified achievements and circumstances.

The recent academic modernization agenda brought about an expansion on the research and on the teaching level. As far as research is concerned, the recent situation stimulated a wave of international co-operations and research project, a trend which is supported and encouraged by international and national funding agencies. Today, Sinological research in most European countries covers a wide range of subjects. Let me take Taiwan Studies as an example: Although this field was virtually unheard of in the past and became popular only during the last two decades or so, almost every institute of Sinology or Chinese Studies has nowadays expanded its range of course offerings and integrated at least some aspects of Taiwan Studies in its curriculum. This would be catered for by

a person who considers Taiwan Studies one of his / her areas of expertise, and most scholars of modern or contemporary Chinese literature would – at least on the teaching level – contribute to the study of Taiwanese literature in one way or another.

Academics act as individual researchers, not as members of a certain “school.” Their research work is linked through specialist research groups in which a person’s nationality or place of work is irrelevant. Research centres, specialised discussion lists and conferences further enhance the built up of international networks of scholars working in the same field, including colleagues in the PRC and in Taiwan.

As far as teaching is concerned, we observe ongoing exercises of modifying and unifying curricula throughout Europe during the last decade. Countries in which BA degrees did not exist in the past have now introduced - or are about to introduce - undergraduate programmes. At the same time, the requirements for BA, MA and PhD programmes are brought into line with the standards in other European countries. These modifications lead to greater mobility of students. The number of students who study an undergraduate degree in one country, do an MA in another, and pursue PhD studies in perhaps a third country is increasing steadily. Although this development poses a number of restrictions for institutions to design their own teaching portfolio and define their academic “identity”, the reformed curricula make it more convenient for students to compare institutions and their degree courses. It thus follows that we witness an increased competition between institutions not only within one country, but on an international scale. Institutions thus no longer rely on students from their own city or country, but need to attract an international body of students not only from all over Europe, but also from overseas.

On the publication sector, we observe a similar though somewhat different situation. There is certainly a strong trend towards the international journals and publishing houses with their world-wide distribution networks, but we should not underestimate the importance of minor journals, series editors and publishers who cater for their home markets. It has to be emphasised that translations into German, French, Italian, Dutch, Czech, Hungarian, Polish and so forth serve an important purpose in the relevant countries. Although the increasingly English language-focused international research community hardly takes notice of translations and research published in most of the continental European languages, and although some translators and researchers are unnecessarily deferential towards English renderings and publications, we need to remind ourselves that the lion’s share of Sinological publications in Europe is, quite naturally, neither written nor published in English. It is also worth noting that publications in continental European languages have a much higher profile than their international reception might imply at first glance. Unfortunately the level of language training in pre-university education is in steady decline throughout Europe, and so is the number of young scholars well versed in more than three European languages. In addition to the fact that it can be difficult to find publications in Hungarian or Czech and so forth in bibliographies and to locate them physically, we also need to acknowledge that only a handful of young Sinologists in Western Europe can actually read and work with these publications.

To sum up: it is probably true that these developments do, in principle, not create an entirely new situation for leading academics and their institutions inevitably attracted a fairly international body of students. And historically speaking, the leading journals and publishers always aimed at a fairly international clientele of readers and authors. Leaving the new means of communication which

undoubtedly play a major function in this scenario aside, it has to be emphasised that the way in which the mobility of students and academics increased attributes a new quality to the environment in which Sinological research and teaching are conducted.

Higher Education in a Changing Society

During the last decades, the status of universities as well as their relation with the state and the market has undergone considerable changes. Different countries apply different strategies to tackle the challenging task of reforming their educational systems. It thus follows that some of the problems raised here may still seem a good way off in one country, whereas they may already have become reality in another. Whatever the concrete situation in one specific country, we observe a rapidly shrinking level of public grants throughout Europe. The advent of the new political and economic conditions has altered the conditions which define the scope and status of Sinology for ever. Throughout Europe, universities are either reorganised by state bureaucracy or are allocated the task of reorganising themselves. Within the imposed framework they are transformed into independent business units: universities, faculties, departments and institutes are converted into profit centres with or without (full) budgetary responsibility. As a result of the recent (in some countries) and ongoing (in other countries) drastic reductions in public funding and the introduction of tuition fees in most European countries, the social, political and educational function of universities changed substantially: the higher education sector became perceived as a market commodity, and universities are supposed to function as providers of this commodity.

In tandem with the current utilitarian vision of higher education, we observe a steady degradation not only of university education but also of universities as research institutions. These key dynamics and the new managerialism that dominates universities nowadays have a lasting effect on institutions. Based on the assumption that universities can and should be run as businesses, their activities are primarily cost driven. Student numbers and the income generated by these students through tuition fees and (where applicable) government funding define the fate of certain courses. A certain number of students per course is defined as financial “break even point”, academics may even be presented with calculations of monetary gain, i.e. the profit made by the institution through running a certain course. The quantitative logic targets the economically least viable subjects and questions the “necessity” of offering certain courses and (degree) programmes on purely non-academic grounds. Whereas institutions are resoundingly silent when it comes to scholarship and research, the transmission of scholarship and intellectual passions of scholars, the new circumstances have turned students into – to say it bluntly – customers and academics into commodity providers.

How does institutionalised Sinology keep with the times and meet the demands? It may sound ironic but it seems that Sinology is actually in a relatively secure position. The continuous interest in China and the widespread view that its economic potential offers ample job opportunity for graduates create a situation in which institutes of Sinology tend to have a reasonably high and stable number of students. As for the situation in the United Kingdom, it is certainly worth noting that within the wider field of studies of foreign languages and cultures, the study of East Asian languages remains rather popular with freshmen whereas Germanic, French, Greek or Russian studies observe a rapid decline in student numbers. A similar trend can be observed in a number of European countries. As a consequence of the strong demand, a great number of universities nowadays offer

Chinese language courses in their institution wide language programmes. These are modern language training programmes on a level which may well be described as “survival Chinese”. Since the majority of students nowadays is primarily interested in achieving a rather primary level of linguistic proficiency in modern Mandarin and an elementary overview on cultural issues, Sinological institutes face the task of making their courses available to greater numbers of students. As a consequence, even some of the most specialised senior scholars need to deliver introductory courses that could easily be given by any PhD student. As for basic language training courses this does mean that some institutes need to run their language courses in groups of a hundred students. The recent restructuring exercises complemented by curriculum reforms thus turned into reality an anxiety that is as old as institutionalised Sinology: the tyranny of numbers and the emphasis on practical skills have finally transformed them into language schools. It is true that economies forced the era of mass teaching upon a large number of institutions for quite some years, but it is also true that there remain still a few institutions which manage to keep class sizes within a reasonable limit.

Given the current framework, it seems ironic that the survival of traditional Sinology rests in no small measure upon the large number of students who take elementary and introductory courses. In this sense, the continuous interest in contemporary China may thus offer a budgetary basis for keeping traditional Sinology, the study of pre-modern texts, and highly specialised seminars alive and thus cater for the rather small “niche market.”

In view of public expectations and student demand, institutions are forced to re-evaluate their coverage of subjects and offer courses that attract bigger numbers and that introduce a variety of new combinations of language-based and subject-based topics. With the reductions of the traditional side, the coverage of subjects taught within most institutes of Sinology nowadays goes far beyond the traditional realm of Sinology, and includes courses on subjects such as Chinese film and media studies. This reorientation and adjustment to market forces also brought about a trend to alter the job descriptions of academic posts and therewith consolidate the new situation. The greater part of (full) professors and chairs appointed during the last decade work in the modern field, and a considerable number of these new appointees took over from colleagues who specialised in the study of pre-modern China.

As far as libraries are concerned, it is hardly surprising that in line with the new demands collections tend to be shifted from research to teaching libraries. Where libraries still fulfil the function of research collections, the financial stringency has left visible traces on the shelves. The increase in book production and book prices in East Asia and elsewhere has imposed additional substantial financial burdens on libraries, and librarians are primarily engaged in the generation of external funding and donations.

Needless to say that mass teaching, the lack of opportunity to offer advanced research courses, library restrictions, and the enigmatic mountains of bureaucracy contribute to an increasing level of academic frustration.

Afterthought

As Sinology does neither enjoy a privileged place in government thinking nor attract large research funding, students and junior researchers face an almost chronic absence of scholarships, travel grants and career opportunities. Since the introduction of tuition fees, the need for affordable

ways in which students finance their university studies became strikingly obvious. The current situation with its lack of scholarships for PhD students, post-Doc fellowships and research programmes reduces the pool of potential research students and deters all but a tiny handful of dedicated young scholars. The support that institutions – be it through external funding or whatever other means – offer for young scholars will not only determine the future of Sinological studies but also define the position and the reputation of institutions.

As for the research aspect, an interesting period elapsed since the discussions that took place during the 1960s and 1970s. It is certainly true that the substantial shifts which followed this discussion shaped Sinological research ever since. But it is equally true to say that European Sinology hardly went as far as US Sinology in implementing the ideas adumbrated in this discussion. It is thus interesting to note that colleagues who pronounce a certain weariness of dominant research paradigms and the interdisciplinary and cross-regional approach “requirement” etc. make their voices heard more openly again.